

POPE JOAN

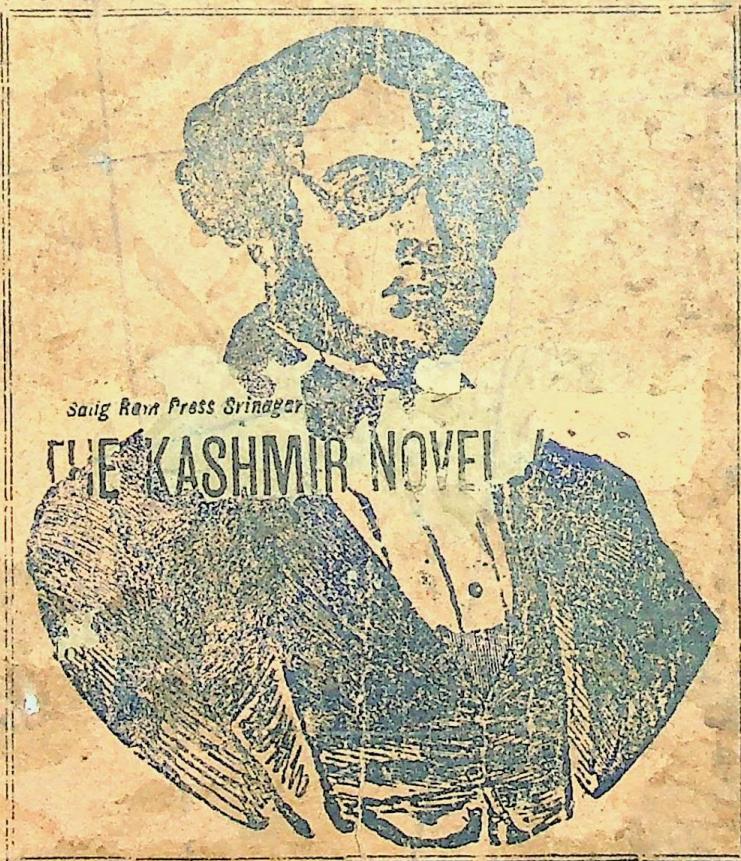
OR 166-1

THE FEMALE PONTIFF

BY

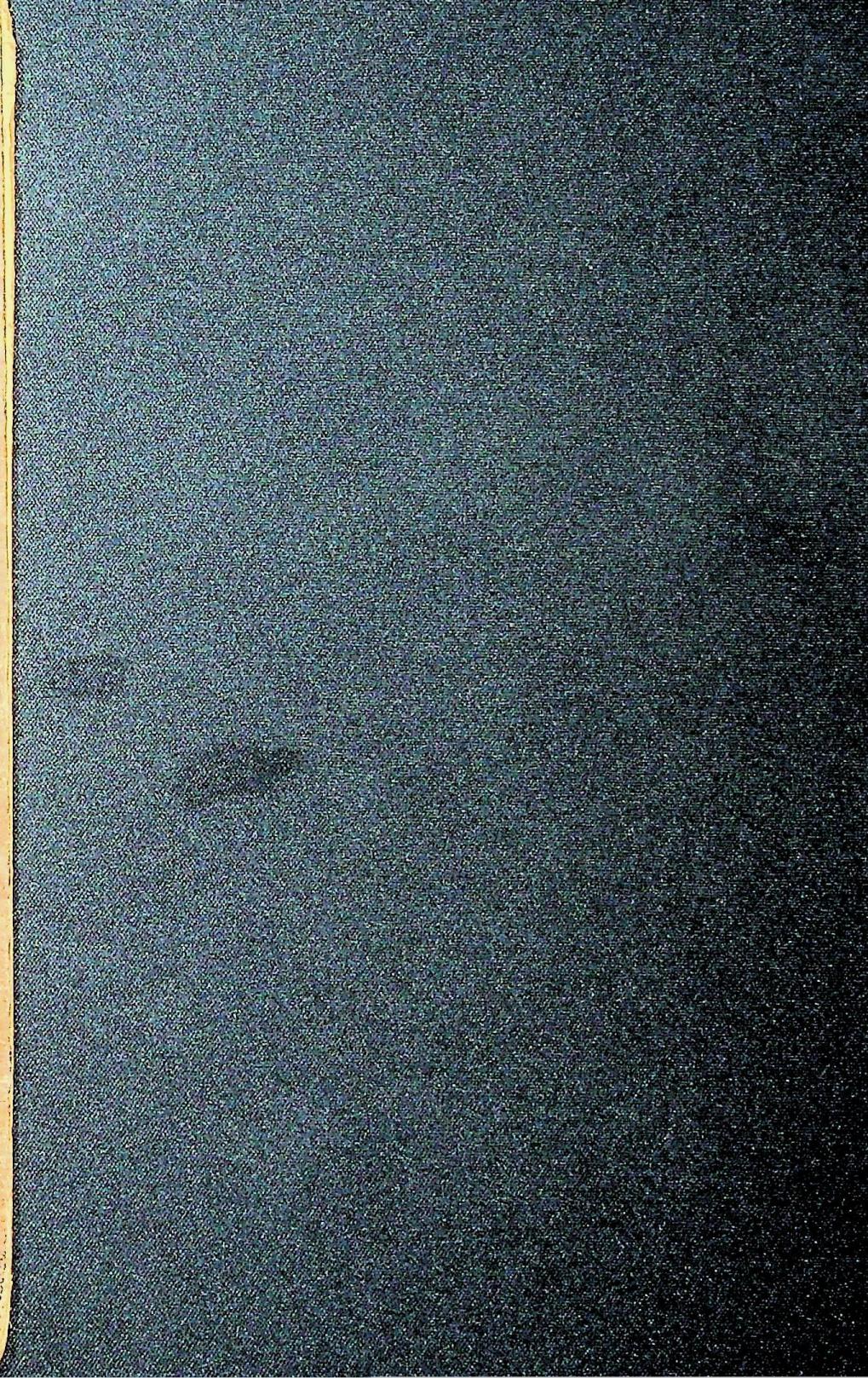
G. W. M. REYNOLDS

Vol 3



THE SUPERIOR WATCH CO.

MADRAS.



POPE JOAN

OR

THE FEMALE PONTIFF

BY

GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS

NEW EDITION, VOLUME III

THE SUPERIOR WATCH CO., MADRAS, E

CONTENTS OF VOL. III

CHAPTER	PAGE
XLI. The Lapse of thirteen days ...	215
XLII. The battle of Valladolid ...	221
XXIII. Scenes after the Battle ...	226
XLIV. The trial of the Archbishop...	233
XLV. Don Roderick's Tower ...	238
XLVI. The Legend of Don Roderick's Tower ...	244
XLVII. Sequel of the Adventures at the Tower...	251
XLVIII. The Mystery of Mysteries ...	257
XLIX. The Mission accomplished ...	263
L. The King and the bandit ...	268
LI. Abdu-Rahman's treatment of Joan	272
LII. The Tournament ...	275
LIII. The second visit to Calatrava Castle	283
LIV. The Royal Party ...	289
LV. The Armour and the jewels ...	291
LVI. Mauregato's Narrative ...	29
LVII. The Battle of Buytrago ...	3
LVIII. The Papal Election ...	3
LIX. The Catastrophe ...	3

POPE JOAN

OR

THE FEMALE PONTIFF

VOLUME III

CHAPTER XLI

THE LAPSE OF THIRTEEN DAYS

W^EES—the iron crown was indeed penetrated with heat until it shone white as if made of silver.

The two executioners with their long pincers suddenly raised it from the embers and placed it upon the head of the victim.

His hair blazed up in a moment—and the convulsion of a mortal agony shook his entire frame. But he breathed not a syllable of lament, nor suffered his lips to yield even the faintest moan indicative of anguish.

A demoniac look of satisfaction appeared upon the countenance of the archbishop as he contemplated the dauntless sufferer, but a cloud almost immediately gathered on his lordship's brow, as he observed the courageous spirit in which the man met his martyrdom.

Oh! for similes and metaphors to express the vilest of atrocities and the most refined of cruelties. Let not the poet or the romanist dive down into the depths of hell and seek the deeds of devils and fiends as the fittest illustrations, but let

him look into the annals of the human race—search the career of tyranny, superstition, and religious persecution—drag forth to the light of day all those horrors which have been perpetrated in deep dungeons and subterranean torture-rooms,—and there will be found no lack of appalling instances and soul-harrowing examples.

Never on earth—never on the rack or the wheel—was seen a more tremendous of over-wrought suffering, subdued by the force of a dauntless courage, than that which Don Xavier Villena now contemplated.

The iron crown eat its way to the brain of the victim—the principles of life and death were warring within him, convulsing his athletic form in spite of himself—but though the agony of agonies was depicted on his countenance, his lips spoke no word and gave utterance to no lament.

But we shall not—we cannot dwell upon the scene. In a few moments all was over—and long ere the iron crown was cold, it rested upon the seared, scathed, and hissing brow of a corpse.

The body was unchained from

the chair, and borne from the subterranean torture-room up into the court-yard of the palace.

There it was fastened upon horseback, two stout staves being fixed perpendicularly to the stirrups and the saddle in such a manner as to sustain the corpse in an upright position.

Then, the wand with the white flag being attached to its right hand, the terrible equipage was led forth by a party of archer guards into the streets of Valladolid.

A profound consternation seized upon the multitudes assembled in the great thoroughfares, as this awful spectacle broke upon their sight.

Rumours had already been current that the herald from Gonzalez Andujar's troops was to be put to death, but few had anticipated so demoniac a catastrophe as this.

The hearts of even the bravest and boldest were stricken with terror, for the appalling exhibition seemed to be not only intended as an insult to the insurgents beyond the walls of Valladolid, but likewise a solemn warning to those who entertained rebellious projects within.

A deep and ominous silence prevailed as the archer guards conducted the frightful equipage through the streets.

From the casements of the houses terrified countenances were withdrawn in sickening haste, from the balconies did the spectators shrink back, speechless and trembling, into their apartments. It appeared as if the Angel of Death himself were passing through the streets, shedding the influence of palsied horror on either side.

And when the first feeling of consternation had somewhat passed away and the numbness of profound dread began to yield to the

excitement of acuter sensations, old men shook their heads ominously—young men knit their brows and compressed their lips—and women gazed in mute anguish upon fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, as if to inquire whether they could tolerate or countenance so stupendous a crime.

Upon the ramparts, when the news circulated amongst the soldiery, the impression was far different from what the cruel prelate and the civic authorities had anticipated. The boldest heart quailed—the most dauntless spirit was shaken at the tidings—for the natural belief now was that if Gonzalez Andujar should succeed in taking the city he would give no quarter and manifest no mercy.

Even the brave governor-general himself shook his head gloomily, and muttered to himself, "The archbishop has gone too far!"

Meantime the dreadful equipage proceeded through the city—that naked corpse seated on a slow-pacing steed, and bearing the iron crown upon his scathed and blasted brow!

On reaching the eastern gates, the sentinels fell back in horror from the hideous spectacle,—and the warden was seized with so dread a trembling that he could not put the massive key into the lock. The archer guards who escorted the equipage of death, were therefore obliged to unfold the huge portals.

Then the animal, bearing its awful burden, passed alone and unattended beneath the portcullis that was raised, and over the drawbridge that was lowered for its egress.

In front of a small cottage about a third of a mile from the eastern gates of Valladolid, and where Gonzalez Andujar had established

his headquarters, a number of warriors were assembled. Some were on horseback—others were on foot.

From that point, which was on the brow of an eminence, a full view could be obtained of the city with its lofty towers, its numerous spires, its sombre-looking castle, and its frowning ramparts crowded with troops whose armour and spears gleamed bright in the sun, which had now passed its meridian by about two hours: and from that same point also, could the eye survey the long lines and columns of the insurrectionary force, drawn up in battle array against Valladolid.

In the midst of that group of warriors were two deserving especial notice.

One was a tall man—apparently in the prime of life—and with a countenance of the most perfect masculine beauty. His features were of Grecian faultlessness: his coal-black hair curled naturally; and his teeth were small, even, and white as ivory. Valour, decision, and generosity mingled in the expression of his face. He looked the hero that he was. He was clad in sable armour: his vizor was raised—and over his helmet waved a large plume of black feathers. His sword was of unusual size and was evidently meant to be wielded by no common arm. He bestrode a colossal steed dark as his own armour and glossy as his graceful plumage, while to the saddle hung a tremendous curtle-axe.

This mighty warrior was Gonzalez Andujar.

On his right hand was that knight in the brilliant steel-armour who had combatted so valorously in the conflict of the preceding day. But on examining this shining panoply with attention, it would soon be perceived that the corslet,

made to fit close to the form, was fashioned so as to suit the contours of a female bosom. Yes—this gallant knight was no other than our heroine, Joan Gilbertous, who had obeyed the promptings of her powerful mind and enthusiastic spirit, and had buckled on the war-garments of the sterner sex. Her presence in this martial apparel and in company with the general at the head of the troops, had animated them with a double ardour, and under that influence had they sustained the fatigues of forced marches, and eventually won so glorious a victory over the troops sent out from Valladolid to oppose them. Nor less were they now burning to distinguish themselves again, and to march to the assault of the city, in case the mission of the herald should prove fruitless.

It was about two o'clock, we say, in the afternoon when the eastern gates were seen to open, and a figure on horseback rode forth. By the white flag in his hand, it was immediately recognised as the herald; and the instinct of the steed, which was the unfortunate envoy's own, led him towards the point whence he had started a couple of hours previously.

But as the grim and grisly equipage approached the group in front of the cottage, an awful suspicion stole into the minds of the persons assembled there; and it soon became only too apparent that a hideous treachery had been perpetrated towards the herald and a tremendous insult levelled at the insurrectionary army.

In a short time the equipage was close to the group; and then the full horror of the outrage displayed itself to the astounded gaze and infuriate minds of Gonzalez Andujar and his companions.

The squires and pages attendant

the chair, and borne from the subterranean torture-room up into the court-yard of the palace.

There it was fastened upon horseback, two stout staves being fixed perpendicularly to the stirrups and the saddle in such a manner as to sustain the corpse in an upright position.

Then, the wand with the white flag being attached to its right hand, the terrible equipage was led forth by a party of archer guards into the streets of Valladolid.

A profound consternation seized upon the multitudes assembled in the great thoroughfares, as this awful spectacle broke upon their sight.

Rumours had already been current that the herald from Gonzalez Andujar's troops was to be put to death, but few had anticipated so demoniac a catastrophe as this.

The hearts of even the bravest and boldest were stricken with terror, for the appalling exhibition seemed to be not only intended as an insult to the insurgents beyond the walls of Valladolid, but likewise a solemn warning to those who entertained rebellious projects within.

A deep and ominous silence prevailed as the archer guards conducted the frightful equipage through the streets.

From the casements of the houses terrified countenances were withdrawn in sickening haste, from the balconies did the spectators shrink back, speechless and trembling, into their apartments. It appeared as if the Angel of Death himself were passing through the streets, shedding the influence of palsied horror on either side.

And when the first feeling of consternation had somewhat passed away and the numbness of profound dread began to yield to the

excitement of acuter sensations, old men shook their heads ominously—young men knit their brows and compressed their lips—and women gazed in mute anguish upon fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, as if to inquire whether they could tolerate or countenance so stupendous a crime.

Upon the ramparts, when the news circulated amongst the soldiery, the impression was far different from what the cruel prelate and the civic authorities had anticipated. The boldest heart quailed—the most dauntless spirit was shaken at the tidings—for the natural belief now was that if Gonzalez Andujar should succeed in taking the city he would give no quarter and manifest no mercy.

Even the brave governor-general himself shook his head gloomily, and muttered to himself, "The archbishop has gone too far!"

Meantime the dreadful equipage proceeded through the city—that naked corpse seated on a slow-pacing steed, and bearing the iron crown upon his scathed and blasted brow!

On reaching the eastern gates, the sentinels fell back in horror from the hideous spectacle,—and the warder was seized with so dread a trembling that he could not put the massive key into the lock. The archer guards who escorted the equipage of death, were therefore obliged to unfold the huge portals.

Then the animal, bearing its awful burden, passed alone and unattended beneath the portcullis that was raised, and over the drawbridge that was lowered for its egress.

In front of a small cottage about a third of a mile from the eastern gates of Valladolid, and where Gonzalez Andujar had established

his headquarters, a number of warriors were assembled. Some were on horseback—others were on foot.

From that point, which was on the brow of an eminence, a full view could be obtained of the city with its lofty towers, its numerous spires, its sombre-looking castle, and its frowning ramparts crowded with troops whose armour and spears gleamed bright in the sun, which had now passed its meridian by about two hours: and from that same point also, could the eye survey the long lines and columns of the insurrectionary force, drawn up in battle array against Valladolid.

In the midst of that group of warriors were two deserving especial notice.

One was a tall man—apparently in the prime of life—and with a countenance of the most perfect masculine beauty. His features were of Grecian faultlessness: his coal-black hair curled naturally; and his teeth were small, even, and white as ivory. Valour, decision, and generosity mingled in the expression of his face. He looked the hero that he was. He was clad in sable armour: his vizor was raised—and over his helmet waved a large plume of black feathers. His sword was of unusual size and was evidently meant to be wielded by no common arm. He bestrode a colossal steed dark as his own armour and glossy as his graceful plumage, while to the saddle hung a tremendous curtle-axe.

This mighty warrior was Gonzalez Andujar.

On his right hand was that knight in the brilliant steel-armour who had combatted so valorously in the conflict of the preceding day. But on examining this shining panoply with attention, it would soon be perceived that the corslet,

made to fit close to the form, was fashioned so as to suit the contours of a female bosom. Yes—this gallant knight was no other than our heroine, Joan Gilbertous, who had obeyed the promptings of her powerful mind and enthusiastic spirit, and had buckled on the war-garments of the sterner sex. Her presence in this martial apparel and in company with the general at the head of the troops, had animated them with a double ardour, and under that influence had they sustained the fatigues of forced marches, and eventually won so glorious a victory over the troops sent out from Valladolid to oppose them. Nor less were they now burning to distinguish themselves again, and to march to the assault of the city, in case the mission of the herald should prove fruitless.

It was about two o'clock, we say, in the afternoon when the eastern gates were seen to open, and a figure on horseback rode forth. By the white flag in his hand, it was immediately recognised as the herald; and the instinct of the steed, which was the unfortunate envoy's own, led him towards the point whence he had started a couple of hours previously.

But as the grim and grisly equipage approached the group in front of the cottage, an awful suspicion stole into the minds of the persons assembled there; and it soon became only too apparent that a hideous treachery had been perpetrated towards the herald and a tremendous insult levelled at the insurrectionary army.

In a short time the equipage was close to the group; and then the full horror of the outrage displayed itself to the astounded gaze and infuriate minds of Gonzalez Andujar and his companions.

The squires and pages attendant

upon the chief bent their eyes upon him in mute suspense, to ascertain what vengeance he would wreak for this crowning turpitude. But tears trickled down the cheeks of Gonzalez Andujar as he reflected upon the awful fate which had deprived him of a trusty, valorous, and devoted adherent. As for Joan—her heart sank within her, for she shuddered at the thought that perhaps her beloved Berthold was likewise no more!"

"Take down the corpse—let the priest attend—and see that it be interred with all becoming decency," were the rapid commands which Gonzalez Andujar suddenly delivered, as he dashed away the tears from his heroic countenance. Then, in a firm and decided voice, he exclaimed, "I will not spare that cruel prelate, if he fall into my hands!"

Having thus spoken, he made a sign for Joan and his squires to accompany him, and he forthwith began to ride along the ranks of his army. Halting at certain intervals, he addressed the troops in a tone of thrilling enthusiasm—his full sonorous voice swelling with the harmonious power of an organ's grandest notes, as he explained the outrage which had been perpetrated upon the herald.

Fire flashed from the eyes of the troops—mailed hands took a tighter grasp upon the weapons which they bore—and cries of fury against the Archbishop of Valladolid rose from the listening hosts and rent the sky.

• Thus was it that Gonzalez Andujar and Joan, attended by the squires, passed along the ranks of the entire army, to which recruits were flocking in from all quarters, well provided with those weapons which the hero himself, under the disguise of Old Evan the pedlar, had for years past been secretly

distributing amongst the peasants and other sections of the enslaved working classes.

That same evening an assault was made upon the city. It was vigorously attempted, and as desperately met.

A portion of Gonzalez Andujar's troops cut down huge trees, flung them into the moat, and thus formed rafts wherewith to reach the walls; while another portion kept up an incessant fire of arrows upon the garrison, in order to cover and protect those operations. Scaling ladders were raised against the walls—a footing was gained thereon—and a fearful conflict took place. Darkness fell upon the scene, but still the combat raged all along the eastern battlements.

The carnage amongst the troops defending Valladolid was dreadful, but towards mid-night Gonzalez Andujar deemed it prudent to withdraw his warriors from a struggle which could not be decided then.

On the following morning—and for the twelve succeeding days the aggressive operations were continued.

Meantime the army of the outlaw of the Sierras had swollen to upwards of eleven thousand men; and provisions were brought to his encampment from all the surrounding districts. The incident of the murdered herald, so far from intimidating his own warriors, had goaded them to a pitch of fury, and the table of the archbishop's fiendish vengeance had spread like wildfire throughout the country, creating a terrible indignation against that prelate and enhancing the sympathies already so extensively existing for the cause of Gonzalez Andujar.

Every day beheld a fresh attack upon the city, which was still defended with remarkable valour. But it was the valour of despera-

tion—the valour, also, that was inflamed by copious libations of wine: and it was only by the lavish distribution of gold that the ranks of the governor-general's forces could be replenished. At length a convoy of provisions, sent from a neighbouring town in the western provinces for the use of the beleaguered city, fell into the hands of Gonzalez Andujar, and then famine began to stare the inhabitants of Valladolid in the face.

The troops who defended the city—comprising the regular soldiers, the archer guards, the alguazils and the recruits—now showed signs of discouragement, and soon talked openly of the prudence of treating with the general of the insurgent army. These manifestations grew so alarming, that on the thirteenth day the governor plainly and frankly assured the archbishop that he apprehended a military revolt.

"The working classes are disarmed, it is true," said the governor: but they will find weapons of some sort should the troops turn round upon us. Moreover they will break into the castle—plunder the armoury—and recover the swords and battleaxes, the lances and the bows, which we have taken from them. At this moment the insurgent forces are preparing for the day's wonted attack: Gonzalez Andujar is a good general, and knows how to harass us incessantly. Besides, it appears that the young knight in the glittering steel armour, who combats so constantly and so valorously by his side, is a woman, and the presence of that heroine gives extraordinary encouragement to the rebels."

"A woman!" ejaculated the

archbishop, struck by the intelligence.

"Yes—a woman, my lord," replied the governor. "Over her shoulders she has hitherto worn a bright red scarf: but yesterday, when she mounted the walls, side by side with Gonzalez Andujar, the scarf was torn off in the conflict, and the fashion of the steel corselet proclaimed her sex. The troops of the garrison are struck with superstitious awe; and they declare that an angel in female shape fights in the cause of Gonzalez Andujar.

"Say rather a demoness," exclaimed the archbishop, with concentrated bitterness: "for that woman must be none other than Joan Gilbertus, who escaped from the funeral pyre at Duera, as you have so often heard related."

"Ah! the mistress of the fugitive, Abbot of Fulda! cried the governor. "And he, my lord, is a prisoner in the dungeons of your palace?"

"He is," returned the prelate with a smile of sardonic malignity. "Think you that if we erect a gibbet upon the walls—a gibbet high as that which was to hang Haman, according to the sacred writings—and if this Berthold Neckar were carried forth to execution,—think you, I say, that Gonzalez Andujar would make terms with us?"

But before the governor had time to reply to this proposal, the door of the audience-hall where the interview was taking place, flew violently open—and a page rushed in, exclaiming, "Joy, my lord—joy! The king and his army are at hand for the deliverance of Valladolid!"

These were indeed welcome tidings.

Berthold Neckar was instantaneously forgotten alike by the governor-general and Don Xavier

Villena, and their thoughts were suddenly turned into a new channel. Even the abrupt and unceremonious entrance of the page met with no rebuke from his stern and severe master, in consideration of the important intelligence which he had thus brought.

It appeared that a spy had succeeded in passing the lines of Gonzalez Andujar's forces, and had just entered the city with the joyous news that King Alphonzo in person, at the head of twenty thousand men, was advancing by forced marches to the relief of Valladolid.

His majesty was accompanied by the Duke of Calatrava and all the great officers of state, and was within twelve hours' distance of the diocesan city.

The governor-general at once hastened to communicate these tidings to the garrison in the castle and on the ramparts, wine was liberally poured forth from the archbishop's cellars—the prelate's gold was again distributed with no sparing hand—and the merchants and traders also flocked to the walls to encourage the soldiery by means of presents and promises, to continue the defence of the place until the royal troops should arrive to achieve its deliverance.

For that Gonzalez Andujar's comparatively puny army must be annihilated, and the insurrection put down at once, none of them doubted.

The soldiers, the archer guards, and the alguazils, exhilarated and excited by the rewards, the wine, and the promises lavished upon them, were easily persuaded to return to what was called "their duty :" and when they found, as the day advanced, that Gonzalez Andujar's troops did not advance to the attack as was previously their

wont, they became elate and arrogant, declaring that the outlaw was already frightened and preparing not only to abandon the siege, but also to retreat from the advance of King Alphonzo.

Valladolid now presented a new aspect.

The bells were rung joyously—the members of the aristocratic and wealthy classes, who had hitherto kept in-doors for fear of ill-treatment on the part of the poorer orders, appeared abroad in the streets once more, exchanging congratulations and shakings of the hand—and processions of priests went through the principal thoroughfares carrying the Host. The working-classes looked gloomy and desponding, but still they did not altogether despair as to the result of the coming struggle.

It was true that Gonzalez Andujar had not renewed the wonted attack on this the thirteenth day of the siege: but it was not because he was either worn out or that his heart failed him.

On the contrary, never was his courage more resolute, nor his hope more exalted. For he too had heard of the near approach of King Alphonzo's army, and he was now arranging his own troops in such a manner as to give the monarch a warm reception.

Within the last few days, Madoz, the Marquis of Leon, and Algenora, together with the brave troopers who had vanquished the Moors near Fuencara, arrived at the encampment.

The Spanish maiden was rejoiced to meet her friend Joan, but she was profoundly grieved to hear that the utmost uncertainty still existed relative to the fate of Berthold Neckar. The two ladies had much to say to each other—many explanations to give of their respective

adventures since they parted in the Moorish palace at Madrid, and Algenora became a sharer of Joan's chamber at the cottage on the brow of the hill.

The Marquis of Leon unhesitatingly signified his adhesion to the cause of Gonzalez Andujar. To this resolve he was led by a sentiment of gratitude towards the gallant chief to whose generosity in despatching Madoz with the troopers to Fuencara, he owed not only his life but also the recovery of his adored Algenora: and in addition to this motive, there was the powerful sympathy which he entertained for the cause in which the outlaw of the Sierras had embarked.

Thus, on the thirteenth day of the siege, when King Alphonzo was approaching at the head of twenty thousand men, Gonzalez Andujar divided his own troops into three bodies. The command of the right wing he bestowed upon the Marquis of Leon: that of the left upon Madoz—and the direction of the central division he reserved for himself.

The sun went down. Night spread her veil upon the warlike scene and the beleaguered city—and, the sentinels being duly planted, the insurrectionary army sought repose in anticipation of the battle that was now so near at hand.

CHAPTER XLII

THE BATTLE OF VALLADOLID

THE sun rose in all the splendour of its dawn upon a southern clime—sweeping before its lustrous beams the mists of an autumnal night, and spreading its hues of orange, and purple, and gold throughout the eastern horizon.

And those translucent beams were

reflected in the points of countless spears—glittering armour—and naked swords: banners and pennons fluttered in the gentle breeze;—and plumes waved gracefully over the helmets of steel-clad warriors.

In the cottage, Algenora remained with Malagamba—each offering up prayers, in her own language and according to her own creed, for the success of the insurrectionary army.

This force, consisting of eleven thousand men, was drawn up in three divisions, according to the arrangement already stated. Madoz with the left wing, was ordered to front the city in such a manner that he might be prepared to engage the garrison should it come forth to assist the king's troops.

Gonzalez Andujar, accompanied by the heroic Joan, and attended by his squires and Kiamil, occupied a rising ground in advance of his former position, while the Marquis of Leon was stationed about half a mile on the right, with his flank protected by a thick wood.

The cottage where Algenora and Malagamba remained, was in the rear of the army, but protected from any sally on the part of the garrison of Valladolid, by the troops under Madoz.

The first gleaming of the dawn had displayed the forces of King Alphonzo drawn up at a distance of about three quarters of a mile, and with their lines so extended that their aim was easily divined by Gonzalez Andujar. In fact the monarch having learnt from his scouts that the insurrectionary army was not much more than half the extent of his own, purposed to surround it in such a manner that its rear should be driven back upon Valladolid, so that the garrison would have nothing to do but sally forth and cut the insurgents to pieces.

It was therefore to neutralise this contemplated manœuvre, that Gonzalez Andujar so placed Madoz as to confront the city and keep the garrison in awe, while the Marquis of Leon, on the other hand defended the route which the royalists would have to take in their endeavour to outflank and hem in the insurrectionary army.

Before the battle began, Gonzalez Andujar rode along the ranks of his division, reminding his men of the diabolical cruelty perpetrated towards the herald—calling to their recollection the manifold wrongs which Asturias suffered at the hands of the despot king, the proud church, and the dominant aristocracy—and exhorting them to do their duty.

The magnificent form, the soul-stirring eloquence, and the illumined countenance of the heroic general, produced a thrilling effect upon the warriors whom he thus addressed. Every syllable he uttered—every sound of his voice, so rich in its deep-toned masculine harmony, struck a chord which vibrated to the centre of the soul. His eyes, beaming with the splendour of a glorious intellect and a dauntless mind, transfused their enthusiasm into every heart—and when he ceased to speak the welkin rang with the worshipped name of Gonzalez Andujar.

And by his side, mounted on a plainly caparisoned steed, rode Joan Gilbertus with her vizor raised and her cheeks flushing with a glow of an ardour that amounted almost to a delirium.

The presence of the heroine—her handsome countenance—the fires which beamed in her magnificent eyes—the radiant hope that shone in her looks—and her evident eagerness to play no mean part in the coming death-struggle—tended

to enhance the enthusiasm of the troops. Never did a band of patriots enter with a more fervid feeling upon the mortal conflict."

On the other hand, the royalists were as full of hope and confidence.

The king, clad in complete armour, with a crown circling his helmet and a magnificent plume of white feathers glittering with gems led his army in person. The grand chancellor of the kingdom commanded the right wing, and the Duke of Calatrava the left. The cavalry was numerous, whereas, that of Gonzalez Andujar was exceedingly small even in comparison with the rest of his inferior force—and therefore almost insignificant in numerical strength when considered in reference to the mounted squadrons on the side of his opponents.

The King of Asturias was also attended by a body of four hundred knights, known as the Invincibles. They were all arrayed in steel armour of a uniform fashion. Their plumes and scarves were red, and they were mounted upon black steeds of immense power.

This formidable band was preceded by six trumpeters, while in the midst of his body-guard, rode King Alphonzo, attended by three heralds, twelve squires, and twenty-four pages.

Gonzalez Andujar, having taken up his position in the manner already described, experienced some difficulty in restraining the ardour of his troops so as to induce them to await that attack which they were burning to commence on their own side. But his men obeyed their adored chieftain.

The sun had attained no great height in the eastern quadrature, when the royalists came pouring onward like a mighty torrent—and the battle of Valladolid began.

The conflict commenced with a furious charge made by the Invincibles.

For a few moments the centre of Andujar's division reeled and gave way. But in less than a minute two of the foremost knights were stricken down by the sweeping blade of Gonzalez, and dashing amongst them, he fought with the spirit and strength of a thousand! Joan was not far behind. Kiamil's trenchant scimitar performed wondrous work, and the insurgents of the centre, pressing onward, repelled the careering charge of the invincible knights.

The combat now raged all along the lines of Gonzalez Andujar's division; and never was ground so staunchly maintained—never was a position so well defended.

Column after column—squadron after squadron, of the king's troops endeavoured to break the ranks of the insurgents. But all was of no avail. And in the thickest of the battle were seen the sable plumes of the heroic chief—the white feathers that waved above Joan's burgonet—and the turban of the African, Kiamil.

Death seemed to have lent its power to Gonzalez Andujar—while heaven appeared to shield his life.

Wherever he struck, there some foeman bit the dust; and yet was he constantly assailed by numbers who, guessing but too well who the chieftain in the sable armour must be, burned to take his life. Sometimes he was separated from Joan in the sanguinary medley. But his quick glance, flashing through the bars of his vizor, showed him where she was—and in a few moments would he cut a pathway through the human mass of obstacles, until he regained her side. And often-times, when her own adventurous spirit and reckless daring

plunged her too far into the ranks of the enemy, would her redoubtable friend and protector dash on his foaming steed through the serried bands that barred his way, and reach her at the very moment when she was overpowered by her assailants.

Thus raged the battle for upwards of two hours in the centre of the army.

On the right, the Marquis of Leon had found himself opposed by his own father, the Duke of Calatrava, commanding the left wing of the royalists. The duke wore a vizor to his helmet; but Aurelio recognised the armour of his sire, and also the heraldic blazonry upon the trappings of his steed—whereas the marquis himself being in a plain suit of steel panoply, and also wearing his aventayle over his countenance, was not known to his parent.

For a minute a sharp pang shot through the heart of Aurelio as he found himself thus opposed to the author of his being. But satisfied in his own conscience that the cause which he had espoused was the right one, he resolved to do his best in order to ensure the fortune of the day. He nevertheless passed a strict command along the ranks of his division that the life of the Duke of Calatrava was to be spared in any case, but that every exertion was to be made to take him prisoner at the outset, so as to withdraw the old nobleman as speedily as might be from the perilous chances of the combat.

The troops, being no strangers to the fact that the Duke of Calatrava was their leader's parent, generously signified their resolve to spare him under any circumstances; and then the two divisions joined in desperate conflict.

During the two first hours

after the commencement of the battle, the garrison of Valladolid remained upon the walls watching the progress of the fight. Madoz and his division were therefore kept inactive in the position which they had taken. But at the expiration of that interval, the circumstances of the battle seemed to be such that the Governor-General of Valladolid suddenly resolved to march forth at the head of his troops.

The eastern portals were flung open—the drawbridge was lowered—and the garrison appeared with trumpets sounding and banners flying. A quarter of an hour afterwards the division of Madoz was no longer remaining in inactivity; and this tremendous battle was now raging in three distinct parts of the field.

Were we to enter into minute details and describe how Gonzalez Andujar and his warriors slaughtered the greater number of the invincible knights and took the rest prisoners—how the main body of the king's force was then seized with a panic and began to yield in all directions—how the central division of the insurgents followed up their advantage with tremendous effect—and how by one o'clock that day the royal Alphonzo was compelled to retreat in the presence of the enemy were we to explain all these particulars at length, we might extend our description of the battle to several chapters. And then, moreover, in order to do full justice to every incident of that memorable fight, it would be necessary to show how the Marquis of Leon, with the right wing of the insurgent forces, performed prodigies of valour—how he beat back the dense columns and the careering squadrons that the Duke of Calatrava, unconscious

against whom he was combatting, poured upon that section of the insurrectionary army which his son commanded—how the duke himself was presently taken prisoner and treated with a marked respect and distinction which surprised him—and how at last his division was utterly defeated.

Lastly, it would be requisite to explain how a murderous contest took place between the left wing under Madoz and the garrison of Valladolid,—how the latter were compelled to give way after a valorous struggle—how in their attempt to regain the city, numbers were driven into the moat, where many sank to rise no more—and how the governor-general himself was slain in the conflict.

But we cannot pause to enter into all these details.

Suffice it to say that the royalists were utterly defeated, and by three o'clock in the afternoon the battle of Valladolid was over. The king and the remnants of his shattered army fled in disorder. But Gonzalez Andujar knew that his own forces had suffered too much to enter upon the pursuit with any chance of effecting results more important than those already achieved.

Besides, he was too humane not to devote his first and immediate thoughts to the wounded men who had bled in his cause; and now the hero might be seen riding over the field of battle, superintending the ministrations offered to those who had been injured in the conflict.

It was a glorious victory which he had just achieved, and this humanity on his part was a worthy sequence to a triumph gained in such a cause.

But where was Joan?

With the cheerfully accorded permission of Gonzalez Andujar,

she had gone with a strong body of troops to demand the surrender of Valladolid—that city into which she so much longed to enter, to put an end to the cruel suspense which was torturing her heart relative to her well-beloved Berthold.

In the meantime, what had been the thoughts—what the feelings of the archbishop? He had risen in the morning, confident that the then approaching battle would result in the defeat of Gonzalez Andujar and the deliverance of Valladolid.

His spies and messengers informed him that the garrison was upon the walls, watching the evolutions of the two armies, and that the utmost excitement prevailed throughout the city.

Presently he heard that the conflict had commenced—that the insurgents were fighting with desperate fury—and that at all events King Alphonzo would not obtain an easy victory. Hours passed—and then the archbishop was told that the centre and left wing of the royalists were in so perilous a predicament that the governor-general was about to march forth to their succour.

A little while, and Don Xavier Villena, with misgivings that had fearfully increased, was informed of the murderous slaughter taking place under the very walls, with the garrison and the left wing of the rebels. His lordship was also assured that the working-classes in the city were threatening that they would sally out and lend their succour to the insurgents. The archbishop was bewildered—he lost all his wonted firmness—a mortal trembling seized upon him—and he experienced sensations of horror and alarm such as he had never known before.

He revolved a thousand schemes in his head.

At one moment he thought of going forth with all the clergy of Valladolid and conjuring the insurgents to throw down their arms. But a little reflection told him that the name of Gonzalez Andujar was evidently more potent than the influence of the priesthood.

Next he resolved to appear upon the balcony of his palace, fling gold to the multitudes, and enjoin them to rush to the walls and defend the city, should the insurrectionary army prove victorious. But in order to enable them to do this, it was requisite to restore them the arms which had been taken away: and those weapons, when once in the hands of the masses, might be used against himself.

Then he reverted to his old scheme of erecting a gibbet upon the walls and sending forth Berthold to execution, as a menace in order to bring Gonzalez Andujar to terms. But a second thought assured him that, in the present spirit of the populace, Berthold would be rescued and another blow thereby struck at his own judicial and ecclesiastical authority.

While lost and bewildered in these schemes and projects, the miserable prelate received the crowning tidings of the day. Gonzalez Andujar's division had beaten the main body and right wing of Alphonzo's army, the left wing of the royalists was also routed and the Duke of Calatrava taken prisoner—and the garrison had experienced a still more murderous defeat, the governor-general being amongst the slain.

The archbishop had now no alternative but to fly.

Hastening to his own apartment, he doffed the episcopal dress and assumed that of an ordinary priest,

so that he might be enabled to draw the cowl of his dark gown over his countenance. Then, having secured his most valuable jewels and a heavy bag of gold about his person, he quitted the palace by a private door.

On entering a bye-street, he found himself in the midst of a crowd of the industrious class and poorer orders, who were rending the air with their joyous shouts and cries in honour of the victory which Gonzalez Andujar had obtained over the king's troops.

The archbishop had issued forth from his palace with such precipitation that he had closed the door hastily behind him: and thus retreat was impossible. Gliding along the wall, he endeavoured to escape the notice of the crowd, and, with his hood drawn over his face, he hoped that the sanctity of his garb would ensure him a free passage, even if he should be observed.

"A priest!" suddenly exclaimed numerous voices, and Don Xavier Villena was surrounded in a moment.

"Touch him not!" cried one. "He may be a worthy father of his flock!"

"Then let him recite a benediction upon the cause of Gonzalez Andujar!" exclaimed another.

This proposal was received with shouts of approbation on the part of the assembled multitude, and an awful consternation fell upon the archbishop. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth—he could not give utterance to a word—but his hands held the cowl with a sort of convulsive tenaciousness over his features.

"Who is he? What reverend father is he?" demanded several voices.

"He came out of the private door of the palace," observed one.

"I saw him rush out suddenly and in great haste."

"Ah! then let us know who he is," exclaimed others—and in a moment the cowl was forcibly drawn back from the prelate's countenance.

"The archbishop!" cried innumerable voices, speaking as it were in one breath, when Don Xavier Villena's face, pale and distorted with dread horror, was thus revealed to every eye.

"Ah! he is trying to escape!" said some of the foremost of the crowd. "He has been our tyrant and oppressor—his dungeons are filled with victims—he murdered the herald—we must hand him over to Gonzalez Andujar."

"Release me!" cried the wretched prelate, struggling with desperate energy amongst those who had now fixed their grasp upon him.

"No—no!" exclaimed countless voices: "let him be kept prisoner to be judged by the glorious Andujar!"

And despite his prayers, his menaces, and his offers of reward, the miserable prelate was dragged into the great square in front of the palace, at the very instant that Joan made her appearance at the head of the detachment which the general of the insurrectionary army had placed under her command.

CHAPTER XLIII

SCENES AFTER THE BATTLE

WE must pause for a moment to observe that on reaching the city gates, with her armed followers, Joan had found the drawbridge lowered—the portals wide open—and the sentinels fled.

She therefore at once entered the place, where the arrival of this

detachment of Gonzalez Andujar's troops was immediately welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm on the part of the crowds gathered in that quarter. But when it was understood that the being in the steel armour who led the corps was the heroine of whose exploits so much had already been heard, the scene became one of indescribable excitement.

The half-starved, ragged, oppressed denizens of the industrial class rent the air with their fervid cries — gathered around Joan — kissed the scarf that hung over her corselet — knelt at her horse's feet — and implored her to take off her helmet that they might contemplate her countenance.

This she did, and then, as her luxuriant hair flowed in all its glossy richness over her red sash and her steel-clad shoulders, and as the beams of triumph irradiated her soul-speaking features, she shone in all the glory and majesty of her remarkable beauty.

But, faithful to the idea which was ever uppermost in her mind, she stooped down and in a low tremulous voice asked those who were nearest to her whether they knew aught concerning Berthold Neckar.

The rumour had recently got abroad that the Abbot of Fulda was indeed a prisoner in the dungeons of the archiepiscopal palace, and also that in case of extremity Don Xavier Villena had proposed to use his victim as an instrument to force Gonzalez Andujar to terms. But whether or not Berthold had been put to death within the last day or two the informants could not say.

At this moment a man, who had overheard Joan's anxious inquiries and the uncertain responses just given, pressed through the crowd, and, doffing his rude cap, he said,

"Lady, I can at once relieve you from suspense; the Abbot of Fulda lives;"

"God in his mercy be thanked!" exclaimed our heroine, with a look and in a tone of ineffable devotion; and then tears trickled down her cheeks.

The multitudes were profoundly affected, and for a few moments a deep silence prevailed, every eye being turned upon the brave woman who was as tender and faithful in love as she was valiant and dauntless in war.

"Who are you, friend?" she enquired at length, turning her swimming looks, where April sunshine and showers were blent, upon the individual who had just given her such welcome information.

"I am an unfortunate wretch, lady," was the answer, "whom circumstances compelled to enter the service of the archbishop. There is a monstrous snake in one of the dungeons—and I was its keeper. A fortnight ago, notwithstanding my entreaties, the preacher Velasquez was delivered up to satisfy the ravenous maw of the reptile. But, the blessed Virgin be thanked! I am no longer forced to serve a fiend in human shape—the presence of the brave army of Gonzalez Andujar is the signal of my emancipation from that thraldom—and I shall join its ranks!"

The ejaculations of horror which had burst from the multitude when the doom of Velasquez was thus revealed to them, were now followed by shouts of approval in respect to the latter portion of the man's speech. And then arose the cry of "To the palace! To the palace!"

Joan put spurs to her steed, and advanced along the streets, at the head of her troops, as rapidly as

the crowded state of the thoroughfares would admit; and in a few minutes she entered upon the great square in front of the archiepiscopal dwelling.

It was now that Joan suddenly encountered Don Xavier Villena, who, wrapped in the gown of a monk, was being dragged forward by the infuriate persons into whose hands he had fallen as described at the close of the last chapter.

"Joan!" ejaculated the archbishop, as he caught the first glimpse of her countenance. Then, immediately placing all his reliance and trust in her generous heroism, he said, "He for whose welfare you are doubtless solicitous is safe! Will you command these men to allow me to depart in peace?"

"I have no power, my lord, to grant your request," replied Joan, firmly—yet not without an inward sentiment of commiseration for the fallen man. "The general of the victorious army will presently enter Valladolid—and he must deal with your lordship as he thinks proper. But I dare not hold out the hope that you will escape with impunity, for Gonzalez Andujar, humane and merciful as he is, cannot regard the treatment of his herald with indifference. As for aught that I may have suffered at your hands, my lord, you have my forgiveness — provided I find Berthold Neckar unscathed save in respect to the imprisonment which he has endured."

The archbishop, now grovelling and terror-stricken, continued to plead his cause with anguished earnestness. But Joan commanded her followers to hold him in custody—and this she did as much to protect him from the just rage of the populace as to prevent him from flying the city. He was accordingly borne a prisoner into

his own palace, and lodged in the very audience-hall which had proved the scene of so many mock trials and iniquitous judgments.

Accompanied by the cheers of the multitudes, Joan also passed the portals of the archiepiscopal dwelling, which was immediately occupied by a portion of her troops, while the remainder proceeded to take possession of the castle, the keys of which were surrendered without hesitation. In a few minutes afterwards the banner of Gonzalez Andujar floated high above the frowning towers and battlemented ramparts of the Castle of Valladolid.

Meantime, Joan, on entering the palace, had hastily summoned the gaolers to her presence; and the answers which she received to her hurried and still somewhat anxious inquiries, proved that she had not been misled by the information already given her with regard to Berthold.

He was still in existence—but a prisoner in a gloomy dungeon.

Commanding the gaolers to lead the way into the subterranean vaults, and followed by half-a-dozen of her guards, Joan descended into those dread regions of the archiepiscopal palace; and her heart beat audibly, even though her bosom was imprisoned in the steel corselet as she threaded the passages and corridors of masonry so solid as to be able to repel every sound from within or without.

But when the gaolers stopped at a huge door in a dark recess—when the flickering rays of the lamp fell upon the massive bolts which were now drawn back—and when the ponderous key turned in the lock—ah! how our heroine inwardly blessed that day which had crowned the arms of Gonzalez Andujar with the success the first fruits of which

were now on the point of being enjoyed by herself.

The massive door groaned on its hinges—the beams of the lamp were flung into the dungeon—and Berthold looked languidly up from the straw on which he was lying. But an ejaculation of wonderment and joy burst from his lips as he recognised Joan—his well-beloved, adored Joan—in the panoply of glittering steel.

The next moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

Oh! bliss supreme, excelling all powers of language to describe. But was it real? Had the portal of that dark, damp dungeon unfolded to give liberty to the Abbot of Fulda and restore him to her whom he loved so tenderly and so well—his first and only love?

Ah! such happiness must be a dream—a baseless vision come to beguile a few moments of his matchless and stupendous woe. Such a sudden and unexpected change in his fortunes—oh! no, it could not be real—it was impossible: 'twas but a passing angel-visit to prove that he was not forgotten by heaven, although there was nothing left of earthly hope for him!

“But, ah! this was assuredly no spirit that he embraced—no phantom whose lips were pressed to his own—no aerial form whose tears bedewed his cheeks. And then that lamp which a gaoler held in his hand—its rays illuminated the countenances of soldiers who wept at this touching scene; and these soldiers wore not the dress of the prelate's archerguards nor of the civic alguazils.

Oh! it was no vision—it was no dream. It was a reality—a blessed reality after all and Berthold sank down, overpowered with the weight of too much bliss.

He was borne from his dungeon,

he was conveyed from his horrid dungeon to one of the elegantly-furnished apartment in the palace:—and there, thanks to the assiduous and tender ministrations of Joan, he was soon recalled to life again. Then she bade her guards and the gaolers hasten and liberate all the other prisoners in the vaulted cells beneath—and now she and Berthold were alone together.

But, alas! how pale he looked—how weak and emaciated he was. Nevertheless, he had smiles for Joan—smiles that were neither faint nor sickly, but beaming with ineffable joy, and gratitude, and love. And then what wondrous things had she to relate—and what startling incidents had she to breathe in Berthold's ears.

The banner of insurrection unfurled—Algenora and the Marquis of Leon in safety, and together—the mighty Gonzalez Andujar with a victorious army under the walls of Valladolid—the sanguinary battle in which she herself had borne a part—the surrender of the city—the archbishop, terrible now no more, a prisoner in his own palace—and the King of Asturias flying with his broken squadrons and shattered bands—these were the hurried explanations, mingled parenthetically with a thousand tender assurances and affectionate remarks, that flowed from the lips of the heroine.

But we must now leave the happy Berthold and his beloved Joan to converse upon all that was interesting to them while we proceed to state that the guards whom she had despatched to the liberation of the prisoners performed this duty with alacrity and pleasure.

Conducted by the gaolers, they visited every nook and corner of the dreadful subterranean caverns. The most grateful recompense

which they could possibly have received for the dangers and perils encountered in the great battle was now experienced in the heartfelt thanks poured forth by those whom they thus restored to freedom.

Amongst the captives so released, were Paquo the interpreter and Dr. Engelheim.

Having accomplished this pleasing duty, the soldiers visited the torture-rooms, where they were horrified by the infernal apparatus and the fiendish contrivances which now met their view.

All the cruel implements and engines to which the demoniac ingenuity of man had given birth, were now destroyed by the indignant guards, and when this was done, they repaired to the vaulted chamber where the huge African serpent was lying in its cage. The monster was fearfully distended in the centre of its hideous body—the human banquet offered up to its maw a fortnight before being yet undigested. In deep lethargy it lay—motionless as if dead: and one of the soldiers, introducing his sword through the bars, cut off its head.

They then quitted the subterranean passages.

It was now verging towards sunset, and Gonzalez Andujar was entering Valladolid at the head of his victorious army.

No pen can describe the enthusiasm of the reception which he experienced. Men, women, and children crowded around him—hailed him as their liberator—blessed him as their champion—and seemed to vie with each other in the fervour of their worship. He rode without his helmet, as Joan had ere now done, and the myriads who thronged upon his path had an opportunity of seeing that their idol was not a being of a savage mien and

repulsive looks, but a demigod of masculine beauty.

In this triumphal manner did he ride onward to the archiepiscopal dwelling, where he established his head-quarters, while his troops were consigned to the barracks and the castle.

The alcalde and the other civic authoritites, who had been in deliberation throughout this eventful day, repaired to the palace to implore the mercy of the conqueror on behalf of all or any individuals whose conduct might have given him offence. But when the hero learnt that they had connived at the treatment shown to his messenger, he refused to grant them the audience so humbly solicited.

That same evening, however, heralds went forth into all the streets, declaring that no class of the inhabitants of Valladolid need entertain any apprehension of ill-treatment, an exception being alone made with regard to Don Xavier Villena, who was to be brought to trial on the morrow.

The proclamation also set forth that no persons engaged in trade or commerce would be allowed to leave the city, but that all the shops must be opened as usual in the morning. This step was absolutely necessary, not only to provide work for the industrious classes, but also that the markets might be thrown open and thus relieve Valladolid from the state of famine which had already commenced within its walls.

And now, what of the Marquis of Leon and the Duke of Calatrava?

The latter, upon being taken prisoner, was conducted to a tent, where, as we have already stated, he was treated with utmost distinction and respect. So soon as his mind could bring itself to unbend somewhat from that *hauteur* which

even he preserved in the hour of his defeat and captivity, he put a few questions to the sentinel mounting guard at the entrance of the tent—when to his ineffable surprise he learnt that it was his own son, the Marquis of Leon, who commanded the right wing of the insurrectionary army.

The duke was at first astounded at this intelligence—the more so because, as the reader will recollect, he had so mercilessly abandoned Aurelio to his fate, when Kara Ali's messenger had applied to him at Burgos for the ransom-money. How he had escaped from the Moors, the duke did not pause to conjecture. His ideas were now all concentrated in the one grand, startling fact that his son was a leader of rebels.

The feeling of amazement having subsided, the duke gave way to an ungovernable rage: and he walked to and fro in the tent, chafing like a famished lion. Attendants brought him wine and refreshments: but he heeded them not. When, however, the intelligence was communicated to him that Gonzalez Andujar's victory was complete, and that King Alphonzo had taken to flight, the duke felt as if he were about to faint with the exhaustion of an excitement fearfully prolonged, and he drank off a large goblet of wine to recover himself. Then, heated by the liquor, he burst forth into the bitterest imprecations against Gonzalez Andujar—the Marquis of Leon—the obscure girl whom he loved—and all who in any way seemed to merit his displeasure.

The fight being over, the Marquis of Leon hastened first to the cottage, where Algenora had been putting up prayers for his safety, and fervid was the embrace of the lovers.

With indescribable devotion did the maiden gaze upon her lover, who not only looked the hero in his steel armour, but who had likewise borne himself as such in the great battle which he had helped to win.

Kiamil experienced a similarly rapturous welcome from Malgamba; and within the walls of that cottage were four hearts thus beating with happiness and joy.

But the Marquis of Leon had not forgotten that his sire was a prisoner: and, having communicated this fact to Algenora, she besought him to hasten and console his parent.

Embracing the beloved maiden once more, Aurelio mounted his horse and repaired in the first instance to Gonzalez Andujar, who was then occupied in superintending the treatment of the wounded. But the moment he beheld the marquis approaching, he said,

“I know that the Duke of Calatrava is your prisoner—and I am not at a loss to conjecture the boon which you have come to demand at my hands. It is already granted—do with your captive as you will!”

Aurelio expressed his heartfelt gratitude for this generosity on the part of Gonzalez Andujar; and, putting spurs to his steed, he galloped across the battle-field to the tent in which the Duke of Calatrava was retained captive.

Dismounting from his horse, Aurelio threw the reins to the sentinel—and then stood still for a few moments to collect his thoughts and prepare himself fully for an interview which he feared would prove a stormy one.

At last he motioned the sentinel to retire to a short distance. Then drawing aside the curtain at the

entrance of the tent, he advanced into the presence of his father.

The duke flung a look of burning hatred upon his son, and then burst forth into a volley of the bitterest invectives.

He denounced Aurelio as a disgrace to the noblest and most ancient family in Asturias, he upbraided him for the love which he cherished for a plebeian girl—he reviled him for joining the army of Gonzalez Andujar—and he disowned him as his son. With infinite pain and sorrow did the young man listen to his sire. But still he listened patiently and silently, in the hope that this storm of wrath would surely expend itself.

At length the duke ceased speaking from sheer exhaustion: and then Aurelio proceeded to justify his conduct in all things.

He urged that with regard to the bestowal of his attachment upon a maiden of humble birth, love, like Providence, was no respecter of persons, and that he could not possibly doom himself to unhappiness for the sake of idle and artificial social conventionalisms.

He expatiated, with all a lover's ardour, upon the virtue, amiability, and beauty of his Algenora; and he besought his father only to grant an interview to the being of his choice, so that by her presence all the eulogiums he now passed upon her might be confirmed. He then explained that his own sentiments were entirely in accordance with the views and aspirations of Gonzalez Andujar: he declared that the Austurians were bound to commence a struggle against the Moorish occupants of the finest provinces of Spain—but he held that before they could be in a condition to do this, they must improve and reform their own institutions.

That double object was the aim of Gonzalez Andujar's insurrection; and therefore had it engaged Aurelio's deepest sympathies. In conclusion, the Marquis of Leon implored his father not to disown him, a parent's curse being hard to bear even when unjustly bestowed: and he wound up his eloquent address by informing the duke that, thanks to the generosity of the victorious general, he need consider himself a prisoner no longer.

But the proud father was implacable and relentless. He remained unmoved alike by his son's gentle remonstrances and earnest pleadings. The only terms on which he would accord his forgiveness, were the abandonment of Algenora, and the renunciation of the cause of Gonzalez Andujar.

To these conditions Aurelio could not consent; and thus the father and son separated.

The Duke of Calatrava demanded that a horse should be immediately provided him; and, in obedience to instructions already given by Aurelio, this request was complied with. The proud nobleman then took his departure from the scene of the sanguinary battle; and, unattended and alone, he sought the route to the nearest town on the way to Oviedo.

Meantime the Marquis of Leon returned to the cottage. But he did not communicate to Algenoro the full extent of the sacrifice which he made for her love's sake. He would not afflict her gentle breast by the tidings that he was disowned by the author of his being. But he limited his explanations to the statement that he and his sire had parted in anger, principally on account of his adhesion to the cause of Gonzalez Andujar.

The lovers, together with Kian and Malagamba, now prepared to

shift their quarters into Valladolid. About an hour after Gonzalez Andujar had himself entered the city, they arrived at the archiepiscopal palace, where Aurelio and Algenora were rejoiced at meeting their friend Berthold.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE TRIAL OF THE ARCHBISHOP

AT ten o'clock on the following morning, the great audience-hall in the archiepiscopal palace was crowded to excess.

A little below the judgment-seat, a barrier had been erected across the spacious apartment to keep back the pressure of the spectators. Between this paling and the farther extremity of the hall, it was one compact mass of human heads.

The avenues and corridors leading thither were also densely crowded; and the living sea was prolonged into the square in front of the palace, where it increased in bulk and volume into a mighty ocean of people.

Within the hall, every requisite solemn preparation had been made for the ceremony that was about to ensue.

Immediately below the judgment-seat, was a table furnished with writing materials, and at which three clerks were placed for the purpose of taking down the evidence. On the left hand, stood a small elevated platform, with a rail in front, for the special use of the witnesses. And on a similarly raised dais on the right hand of the tribunal, was an arm-chair for the accommodation of the prisoner.

The judgment-seat surmounted with a canopy of black velvet, contained three chairs for those who were to preside at the trial—and two rows of Gonzalez Andu-

jar's soldiers maintained a passage amid the crowd to a door opening into the interior of the palace.

Precisely at ten o'clock an usher proclaimed silence throughout the hall, the door just mentioned was thrown open—and Gonzalez Andujar, accompanied by two of the judges of Valladolid entered the hall.

A murmur of applause arose amongst the spectators on the appearance of the hero; but it was instantaneously subdued by the solemn gesture which, he made, and which was meant to imply that any demonstration of the kind would be deemed most unfitting on such an occasion.

Andujar was clad in plain apparel, and without any emblem of military rank. He did not even wear his sword. The two judges appeared in their official robes, their gold chains, and their round velvet caps. Immediately after these three personages had taken their seats upon the bench, the archbishop was introduced.

He looked pale, downcast, and careworn. All his former hardihood had fled—and in his utter humiliation, the characteristic sternness of his features was scarcely perceptible. He wore the monk's gown which he had on at the time of his arrest the previous afternoon: and not a symbol of his episcopal rank now distinguished him.

The moment the archbishop had taken the seat allotted to him, Gonzalez Anduzar spoke as follows:—

"Don Xavier Villena, you are this day placed upon your trial for offences and crimes of a grave and serious nature. According to the rules of war I might have ordained the procedure to be conducted before a purely military tribunal.

But I am resolved that, whatever be the result of the investigation, neither yourself nor any living soul shall be enabled to affirm that the course of justice was marred or prevented by undue influences. I have therefore summoned as my assessors in this case, the two principal judges of the Tribunal of Valladolid—men who are intimate friends of your own, and whose sympathies, if biased in either direction, will naturally incline in your favour. But they have sworn before God, as they will presently swear before man, to administer justice impartially and decide only and solely according to the evidence that may be submitted to them. And to convince you, Don Xavier Villena, that your trial shall be thus honourable to its conduct and just in its results, I hereby pledge myself that should the two judges, after hearing the evidence, pronounce in your favour—thus constituting the majority of our three opinions—I will not only grant them passports to leave the city, should such be their pleasure, but also provide them with a safe and suitable escort to any place whither they may choose to repair. Moreover, I shall consider and treat as mine own personal enemy, any man who may dare to lift a hostile finger or breathe a menacing word against them. Therefore, Don Xavier Villena, you have every guarantee which can be afforded you for the impartiality and justice of your trial; and may heaven direct us to a right issue."

The two judges then took solemn oaths to decide according to the nature of the evidence and the promptings of their own hearts; and under these auspices did the memorable trial of the Archbishop of Valladolid commence.

The first witness summoned

was one of the executioners who inflicted the horrible punishment of the iron crown upon the herald. The man entered into the fullest particulars relative to the crime, which he proved to have been committed by the orders and under the supervision of the archbishop himself. The other executioner was then called, and his testimony was entirely of a corroborative character.

The third witness was the keeper of the African snake—and when he described the circumstances attendant upon the death of the preacher Velasquez, a thrill of horror ran through the whole mass of the audience. The witness deposed to the fact that he had besought the archbishop to spare the victim's life, even while it was yet time—but that his entreaties had been sternly rejected.

The fourth witness was Paquo the interpreter: and when this individual's name was called, the archbishop seemed struck with surprise.

Paquo deposed to the fact that he had been employed by the prisoner to make terms with a certain horde of Moorish banditti, in order to procure the arrest and captivity of Berthold Neckar and Joan Gilbertus; and Paquo explained the various proceedings connected with that mission.

Having related how Algenora Tudela was brought to the palace instead of Joan, he said,

"The day after the mistake was discovered, Dr. Engelheim and I were despatched with a corps of alguazils to conduct Algenora back to the Moors amongst the fastnesses near Buytrago. We delivered the lady up to the banditti whom we found in that district, but we were informed that Joan Gilbertus had escaped. The alguazils, in whose

custody the doctor and myself were kept, brought us back to the palace : and since that period, we remained prisoners in the subterranean dungeons until released last evening by the solders of General Andujar. Dr. Engelheim immediately availed himself of his freedom to quit Valladolid, but I remained behind to communicate all I know relative to that archbishop who has treated me with such wanton, wilful ingratitude."

Paquo then flung a malignant look upon the prisoner, as he descended from the witness-box.

Joan Gilbertus was now introduced into the court.

She was clad in female apparel ; and her presence excited the utmost interest. Her remarkably handsome countenance—her fine figure, so elastic and supple in its gait and so admirable in all its proportions—together with her dignified but modest mien, and the halo which the fame of her heroic exploits flung around her,—all combined to render her an object of enthusiastic admiration.

Advancing to the witness-box, she deposed, with downcast looks, to the infamous overtures which the archbishop had made to her, not only in the hall of the alcalde's mansion at Duera, but likewise in the prison-cell where he had subsequently visited her in disguise. As she thus gave her evidence in a clear firm voice, but with bashful looks, the archbishop grew more troubled than he even yet had appeared : and after she had retired, it was evidently with an acute anxiety that he watched for the coming of the next witness.

When Algenora Tudela was ushered into court, the prisoner's countenance became positively hideous with the expression of its ghastly terrors : because he had felt

that the evidence given previous to the arrival of the female witnesses, had touched upon matters which he hoped to justify as belonging properly and legitimately either to his judicial or ecclesiastical authority ; whereas the testimony of Joan, and Algenora would tend to unmask the dissoluteness of his private life.

The Spanish maiden's beauty excited great interest and admiration amongst the audience ; and the modest firmness with which she deposed to the dishonourable terms offered by the archbishop as a means of saving Berthold Neckar's life, stamped all she said with the impress of unquestionable sincerity.

Senora Tudela having retired, one of the clerks at the table intimated that there were no other witnesses. Gonzalez Andujar then inquired whether the archbishop had anything to allege in his defence. A solemn silence reigned throughout the hall, as the prisoner, after a few moments, stood up and prepared to address his judges.

" From the nature of the evidence," he said, in a low and tremulous voice, which he vainly strove to imbue with firmness, " I perceive that I am charged with various matters, some of which I can justify on the plea of competent authority to act as I have done, and the rest of which I completely and indignantly deny.

" That I ordered the envoy to be put to death, is a truth : but I treated him as a messenger from outlaws and rebels, and as an outlaw and rebel himself. That I put to death the preacher Velasquez, is likewise true : but he was a slanderer and a calumniator of that church whereof I have the honour to be no mean dignitary.

" That I employed the interpreter Paquo to recover the fugitives

Berthold Neckar and Joan Gilbertus, wheresoever and howsoever he might succeed in capturing them, is a circumstance which I willingly admit: but has not the church an illimitable jurisdiction over all who offend against its laws?

"All means were justifiable that had for their object the arrest and punishment of such offenders as the Abbot of Fulda and his paramour.

"The alleged improprieties on my part towards that woman and Senora Tudela, are false and scandalous charges suggested by a revengeful spirit.

"I have thus answered the accusations brought against me, although I might have denied the competency of this tribunal to judge or try me. My lords," he added, in a tone of earnest entreaty, as he looked from one of the judicial functionaries of Valladolid to the other, "you cannot according to your consciences pronounce me guilty, nor give that bloodthirsty man,"—his eyes now settling malignantly upon Gonzalez Andujar,—"an excuse for wreaking his hatred upon me!"

Having thus spoken, the archbishop sat down; and for a few minutes there was another interval of solemn silence in the judgment-hall.

"Now, my lords, how say you?" inquired Gonzalez, at length breaking silence: "is the prisoner guilty of having unjustly and treacherously put the herald to death?"

"Not guilty, on our consciences!" was the response of the two judges: and a gleam of satisfaction appeared upon the countenance of the archbishop, while a murmur of dissent and indigmination arose on the part of the audience.

"Silence!" exclaimed Gonzalez Andujar, in a commanding tone. Then again addressing the judges,

he asked, "How say you, my lords—is the prisoner guilty of having unjustly and treacherously put the preacher Velasquez to death?"

"Guilty, on our consciences!" was the answer. And now a ghastly pallor returned to the visage of Don Xavier Villena, while his whole form was convulsed with a strong spasm that shot through him from head to foot.

"How say you, my lords?" again spoke Gonzalez Andujar: "is the prisoner guilty of indirectly trafficking with certain Moors who are not only lawless banditti in their own territory, but likewise belong to a race of men who are the invaders and sworn enemies of our fatherland?"

"Guilty, on our consciences!" replied the two judges, and the archbishop flung towards them a look of fiendish malignity.

"And lastly," said Gonzalez Andujar, "how decide you, my lords? Is the prisoner guilty of making dishonourable and immoral overtures to the Senora Joan Gilbertus, and likewise to the Senora Tudela?"

"Guilty, on our consciences!" was the answer.

"Perjured monsters!" cried the archbishop, springing from his seat in the fury of desperation: "you are leagued with that blood-hound against me!" he added, pointing towards Gonzalez Andujar. "But the king's cause will eventually triumph: and then woe, woe to the wretches who dare to lay a finger upon me!"

Exhausted by this violent ebullition of impotent rage, the prisoner fell back in his seat. After a short pause, Gonzalez Andujar proceeded to pass sentence upon him.

"Don Xavier Villena," he said in a solemn tone, which was slightly tremulous with the emotion arising

from the performance of a painful duty, "the trial which you have received has been conducted with the impartiality guaranteed at its commencement. You have been found guilty of a heinous murder, perpetrated upon the person of a good, innocent, and holy man, who was in reality the best friend to religion by unmasking those who desecrate its sanctity and commit the most odious crimes in its name. You have also been found guilty of employing agents to traffic with the enemies of the Spanish race: and you have not hesitated to negotiate with Moorish robbers, in order to get into your power a man whom you hate and a woman whom you hoped to render the victim of your lust. Lastly, you have been pronounced guilty of grave and serious immoralities which prove how bad law and mis-called justice have been made subservient to your unhallowed designs. For all these offences there is but one punishment that can be deemed adequate and fitting; and it is therefore my painful duty to adjudge you, Xavier Villena, to suffer death by hanging on a gibbet. You have now but a few hours to live. May heaven touch your heart and render it contrite for the enormities of an ill-spent life."

The archbishop endeavoured to rise from his chair and speak; but he fell back gasping—and his tongue felt as dry as charcoal in his mouth.

His eyes glared wildly—horror, rage, and intense misery were strangely blended in his soul.

The guards raised the wretched man and conducted him from the audience-hall; Gonzalez Andujar and the judges quitted the bench; and the crowds began slowly to dissolve from the scene of that impressive and solemn ceremony which had just taken place.

But when the sentence passed upon Don Xavier Villena was made known to the populace assembled in the great square and the adjacent streets, a tremendous shout arose—a shout in which myriads of tongues all combined their approval as it were in one voice, and which penetrated to the ears of the miserable object of execration as he was conducted away from the court to the solitude of that chamber where he was to spend the last few hours remaining to him in this life.

On the following morning a gibbet, high as that on which proposed to hang Haman, was credited on the rampart of Valladolid.

The walls, the adjacent streets, the house-tops, the windows—every available place, indeed,—all were crowded with spectators anxious to obtain a view of the terrible ceremony.

But Gonzalez Andujar was not present at the scene, nor were Joan Berthold, Algenora, or the Marquis of Leon. Kiamil and Malagamba also remained in the palace during the execution.

Precisely at ten o'clock the miserable Don Xavier Villena was led forth by those very executioners who had so often done his own dreadful work, while a strong body of Andujar's soldiers accompanied the fallen prelate, as an escort to save him from ill-treatment on the part of the exasperated populace.

So terribly crushed with a profound sense of his awful position was he, that he could scarcely drag himself along to the fatal spot; and when he reached the angle of a street where the gibbet broke upon his view, looming high above the heads of the countless masses, he grew faint and would have fallen had not the executioners supported him.

In less than ten minutes more,

all was over, and the terrible Archbishop of Valladoid was a corpse.

Three days afterwards the Marquis of Leon and Algenora Tudela were united in the solemn bonds of matrimony, and a messenger was despatched to inform the bride's father that the happy ceremony had taken place.

On that same afternoon, Berthold and Joan requested a private interview with Gonzalez Andujar: and when they were all three alone together, our heroine informed the chieftain that important business would compel her companion and herself to take a temporary leave of him and resume that journey to Cordova which had already been interrupted by so many and such varied incidents.

"You will arrive in time for that tournament which King Abdurahman has proclaimed throughout Europe," said Gonzalez Andujar, his countenance irradiating with the enthusiasm which the idea of the martial entertainment excited in his soul.

"It is to take place eleven days hence," he observed; "and all the most gallant knights in Christendom will assemble to tilt their spears with the Moorish champions."

"And you, general—shall you not be there?" inquired both Joan and Berthold, speaking as it were in the same breath.

"Yes—I shall be at the tournament, my dear friends," answered the hero. "I propose to leave the Marquis of Leon in command of my army during my absence; and the cause of Asturian freedom will lose nothing by a temporary inactivity, inasmuch as Aurelio can enlist recruits in the interval. The king cannot possibly assemble another army under several weeks, and on my return to Valladolid, my own brave forces will be sufficiently

numerous to enable me to march upon Oviedo. I have well weighed all these circumstances, and am resolved to be present at the Moorish tournament. In three days I shall take my departure with a small escort; and you, my friends, would do well to tarry until then, that we may journey together."

This arrangement was joyously accepted by Joan and Berthold; and as Kiamil and Malagamba were anxious to return into the Moorish territory as speedily as possible, so that they might be married according to the ritual of their own creed—but inasmuch as they dared not venture to cross the frontier alone, for fear of encountering Kara Ali's band—it was determined that they should be included in the party.

CHAPTER XLV

DON RODRICK'S TOWER

A WEEK had elapsed since the arrangement just described: and it now wanted only four days to the commencement of the grand joust which was to take place at Cordova.

Every high road converging towards the Moorish capital was full of life, animation, and bustle. Mussulmans and Christians of all grades and denominations, were seen journeying to that centre of universal attraction.

Large and small parties—solitary travellers—some on horseback, others on foot,—huge wains laden with provisions of all sorts,—mountebanks, pedlars, jugglers, and every specimen of wandering tribes or itinerant venders and hawkers,—lovely damsels, noble dames, and gallant knights,—families of merchants, traders, and peasants,—Christian priests and Moslem dervishes,—all contributed to vary

the scene and sustain the excitement along every road leading to the Moorish capital.

But of all those routes none was more crowded than that which led from Buytrago on the Asturian frontier, through Madrid in the centre of Spain, to the magnificent Cordova in the sunny south. That road was the one by which foreigners who travelled by land were now arriving from all parts of Europe. For rumour had declared that no tournament ever given, either in Christendom or the Moorish territory would bear comparison with the joust now on the eve of taking place at Cordova. The interest it created had therefore spread to the remotest corners of the continent; and nobles, merchants, and wealthy personages from every claim were now on their way to the capital of King Abdu-rahman.

Not only therefore was a large portion of the Moorish population set in motion—leaving their homes and habitations to proceed to Cordova,—but the influx of strangers and foreigners from all parts was immense.

The inns and hostelries were daily and nightly thronged to excess; housekeepers reaped a golden harvest by receiving lodgers and granting a temporary accommodation to travellers—and so great was the demand for chambers stabling, and provisions, that the cost thereof ran up to the most exorbitant prices. Still there was the greatest difficulty in finding room at the different towns, villages, and hamlets, for the floods of visitors flowing through these places on their way to Cordova.

The Moorish authorities did their best to afford accommodation. They caused temporary habitations to be built as well as the short notice of such countless arrivals

would admit—they pitched tents outside the towns for the use of the poorer class of wayfarers—and they brought into requisition every long-closed tower of hitherto neglected ruin in their respective neighbourhoods.

But still numbers were compelled to camp in the fields or seek shelter in the forests, and it was an universal scramble in all points for lodging and stabling. Provisions alone were plentiful; and this was at least fortunate, as well as being no mean consolation where the shoals of visitors so greatly exceeded the numbers that even the most sanguine mind or extravagant imagination had expected.

It was late in the evening and close upon sunset, when Gonzalez Andujar, Berthold, and Joan, attended by Kiamil and Malagamba, who were now man and wife, and escorted by fifty soldiers, came within sight of the city of Toledo. During their journey hitherto from Valladolid, they had proved tolerably fortunate in obtaining accommodation at the places where they halted for the night. But now, from information which had already reached them, they began to fear that this same good luck would not attend them at Toledo.

Not that Gonzalez Andujar or his men cared much whether they reposed upon mattresses beneath a roof, or on the grass under the Canopy of heaven. But Joan was not equally accustomed to such hardship nor inured to such privation;—and moreover, Berthold's health, which was never vigorous, had been impaired by his imprisonment in the dungeons at Valladolid.

The object therefore was to obtain accommodation for our heroine, Malagamba, and the Abbot of Fulda: while Gonzalez Andujar,

Kiamil, and the troopers could easily shift for themselves.

The heroic outlaw of the Sierras—as we may still denominate Gonzalez Andujar, although his rebellion was legalised, not only by the justice of his cause, but also by success—was clad in a plain travelling suit.

His noble countenance was set off with a toque and sable plume, which matched his raven hair; and his commanding form, so tall, well-knit, and symmetrical, was displayed in its fine proportions by a velvet doublet and slashed breeches of the same material. A sumpter-horse carried his suit of black armour and all the necessaries of his toilette.

Berthold retained his student's garb, which has already been described; and he looked pale, thin and sickly.

Joan was also dressed in a style similar to that which we have depicted at the opening of our tale; and the excitement of travelling deepened the flush of vigorous health upon her splendid countenance.

The black African Kiamil, and his sable spouse Malagamba, wore their characteristic Moslem costumes, which set off the athletic form of the first and the perfect symmetry of the latter to such admirable advantage; and their countenances, each of so fine a profile, were animated by the light of happiness as if shining with a dark glory.

The fifty men forming the escort, were arrayed in their military costume—consisting of steel helmets, corselets, and gauntlets: their jerkins and breeches were of buff leather; and they wore heavy boots. The entire party were mounted on excellent steeds; and hitherto their journey from Valladolid has been

characterised by no incident worth recording.

Our travellers were now, as we have already observed, within sight of the ancient city of Toledo, to which point numerous other persons were likewise pressing onward. Presently they reached a point where a purling rivulet intersected the road; and they halted for a few moments to allow their steeds to drink of the limpid stream.

A venerable-looking dervish, or Mussulman monk, was seated at the foot of an immense tree standing by the side of the road: and his wallet, spread open near him, showed that he had been partaking of his evening meal. He was dressed in the garb of the poorest order of mendicant dervishes, and seemed to be bowed down by the weight of years as much as by the fatigues of travel. Indeed, he had every mark of extreme old age. His silver beard covering more than half his countenance, flowed upon his breast, descending even lower than his girdle; and his voluminous turban, of dingy yellow, was drawn over his ears.

He sat in a meditative, or it might be semisomnolent mood, and appeared to take no notice of the wayfarers on foot or the travellers on horseback who were passing along the road.

"Reverend dervish," said Gonzalez Andujar, who was thoroughly conversant with the Moorish tongue, "you seem to be exhausted with weariness. If your purpose be to enter Toledo this evening, one of my men will allow you to mount behind him on his good steed, and thus spare your aged limbs farther fatigue for the present."

"I thank you, Christian," was the answer, delivered in a low but measured and even solemn tone.

"Nevertheless I cannot avail myself of your kindness, for two reasons. In the first place, I am under a vow never to bestride horse, mule, or ass, so long as my limbs do not fail me altogether: and secondly, I come from Toledo and am not journeying thither."

"Ah! you come from Toledo, reverend dervish?" exclaimed Gonzalez. "Then perhaps you can inform us whether there be a chance of obtaining lodgment for any portion of our number. Think you, in a word, that accommodation may be relied upon for two or three persons of my party?"

"I can answer you with certainty, Christain," replied the dervish: "and the information which I have to give, is to the effect that not a single soul of all the way-farers and travellers now hurrying along towards Toledo, will obtain nook or corner wherein to lay their heads this night."

"Know you of any hamlet, house, or cottage in this neighbourhood, where accommodation might be reckoned upon for three persons only?" inquired Gonzalez Andujar. "Or any shed or ruin, even—"

"No hamlet, house, or cottage, Christain," was the reverend man's measured and deliberate reply. "But since you have made a charitable and generous offer to me," continued the dervish, after a brief pause, "I will endeavour to prove my gratitude for your good intentions in that respect. At least I will be your guide to the ruins of Don Roderick's Tower; and there you may all obtain shelter for the night."

"Ah! Don Roderick's Tower!" ejaculated Gonzalez Andujar. "I have often heard of it—'tis intimately connected with the legends of my country—especially with all the tremendous events that preced-

ed or accompanied the fall of that Gothic monarch and the invasion of your Moorish brethren."

"But that tower is haunted," whispered Malagamba, with frightened looks, to Joan: "and neither Moor nor Christian ever ventures near it. Terrible sounds are heard to emanate from within its walls at midnight—unearthly voices issue thence and mingle with the moaning of the wind or fury of the blast—"

"Depend upon it, Malagamba," interrupted Joan, smiling, "you will be safe with so large a party; and all that you have just told me only tends to increase my curiosity to see the tower. Come—General Andujar is moving onward."

Malagamba heaved a profound sigh: and Kiamil, who overheard what had just passed between his wife and Joan, experienced some trouble in consoling and reassuring her.

Meantime the venerable dervish had risen from his seat at the foot of the tree; and his form, though bent by age, was still tall and had evidently once been endowed with no ordinary strength. Packing up his wallet, which he slung over his shoulder, and supporting himself with a staff whereon a sentence from the Koran was rudely inscribed, he led the way along the bank of the rippling stream, thus conducting the party out of the main road. For about ten minutes he proceeded in profound silence, then turning abruptly to the right, he entered a narrow pathway formed amidst a mass of crags which grew higher and higher as the company advanced.

Only two horsemen could ride abreast in this path, which gradually ascended amidst the rocks through which it appeared to have been hewn: but the dervish, pausing

to rest for a few minutes, informed Gonzalez Andujar that this narrow way was not an artificial but a natural one, and that it had been formed by a torrent which in past times gushed down from the rugged heights above.

"My father remembered when the cascade came pouring down with tremendous fury," added the dervish; "and falling into the stream below, it fed a broad and rapid flood where now you have seen a narrow purling rivulet. 'Tis said that when Don Roderick, the last of your Gothic kings, visited the tower and broke the spell of that enchantment which ruled its interior mysteries, the torrent suddenly dried up. But the road which had previously led to the building, also disappeared at the same time. How true this may be, I know not, but such is the legend attached to the place."

"I told you that the tower was haunted," whispered Malagamba in a tremulous voice to Joan.

"But the dervish assures us that whatever spell may have once been upon it, was dissolved long ago," said our heroine, with a smile of reassuring confidence.

Malagamba shook her head but made no answer; she was nevertheless labouring under a presentiment of approaching evil—and Kiamil, though brave as a lion in battle, began to catch the infection of his wife's superstitious fears.

The dervish continued to lead on up the narrow pathway, which presently became a little wider, until it suddenly stopped at the foot of a large ruined tower, built upon the massive crags. There was a deep Gothic entrance, from which the huge door had fallen inward, the wood-work having decayed in those parts where the hinges were fastened.

The sun was now setting; and within the tower silence and darkness prevailed. Some stunted pines grew close by: and the branches, being hastily lopped off, served as torches. By the blaze of ruddy light thus obtained, the party entered the tower, leading their horses along with them: for the hall into which the entrance opened, was spacious enough to have held doublet the number of men and animals.

This hall was in a deplorably ruined and dismantled condition, and not a vestige of furniture remained. The iron bars were even broken away from the narrow loop holes, and several masses of masonry had fallen in from the vaulted roof. The dervish suggested to Gonzalez Andujar that his men should remain in this place together with the horses, for the other accommodations afforded by the tower not much better in respect to comfort, and excessively circumscribed with regards to space.

The hint being adopted, the men proceeded to cut down the trees in order to make a fire to dispel the influence of the damps, while Kiamil lighted a lamp which was carried along with the baggage.

The dervish then conducted Gonzalez Andujar, Joan, Berthold, Malagamba, and her husband, up a narrow flight of stone steps, into a corridor whence two small chambers opened at the side. Like the hall below, these apartments were denuded of furniture: but as their windows looked into the corridor and the outer walls were not perforated in any manner, they were at least better protected from the night air. Each room had a chimney and hearth; and Kiamil, who was laden with some of the wood cut down by the soldiers,

speedily made a cheerful fire in both chambers.

At the end of the corridor there was a third apartment, much dilapidated, and with loop-holes through which the evening breeze now struck chilly. In the centre of the room stood a pedestal, and in each corner was a huge statue of black marble. These represented Gothic warriors, and notwithstanding the dirt that entrusted them, it was easy to perceive that they were fine specimens of sculpture.

An ejaculation of surprise burst from the lips of Gonzalez Andujar, the moment he caught sight of these objects; while Malagamba surveyed them shudderingly, as she clung to Kiamil's arm. But Berthold and Joan examined them with curiosity and interest.

"The legend, then, is based upon truth to a certain extent," said the outlaw of the Sierras, in a musing tone: "for this must be the apartment where, according to the tradition, the mysteries of the future were disclosed to the knowledge of King Roderick?"

"Yes—this is the apartment," said the dervish. "It appears that you are acquainted with the legend, Christian: and therefore you must be aware that these are the four statues which thundered with their weapons in so menacing a manner—and here," he added, pointing to the pedestal, "is the spot where stood the Enchanted Head."

At these words, Joan and Berthold started with surprise, and exchanged looks of deep significance: for the mention of the Enchanted Head forcibly reminded them all in a moment of the mysteries of Calatrava Castle—those mysteries which still ruled Joan's destiny, and which she had so fully explained to him whom she loved.

The dervish alone noticed these

meaning looks which passed between our heroine and Berthold. But he said nothing—for he appeared to be a man of few words and subject to the influence of no idle curiosity.

"What is this legend of King Roderick and the Tower?" inquired Joan, addressing herself to Gonzalez Andujar, and thinking that the tale would probably throw some light upon the mystery of the Enchanted Head: for that the one which had formerly stood upon the pedestal there, was identical with the Marble Image of Calatrava Castle, she now suspected.

"I will tell you the marvellous narratives," said the outlaw of the Sierras. "But let us establish our headquarters," he added, smiling, "in one of the chambers whence the fire has dispelled the damps. We can there partake of our repast; and I will then recite the popular legend to the best of my memory. Perhaps the venerable dervish will bear us company."

"For an hour, with all my heart," responded the individual thus addressed.

The little party now returned into one of the rooms opening from the corridor; and, Kiamil having fetched up the baggage and provisions, cloaks and other articles of apparel were spread upon the floor to sit down upon.

Cold viands, flasks of wine, wheat-en cakes and dried fruits, were now produced and done ample justice to by every one save the dervish, who had already eaten his repast by the side of the stream where our travellers first encountered him.

The meal being over, Gonzalez Andujar began the promised narrative in the following terms.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE LEGEND OF DON RODE-
RICK'S TOWER

“YOU are all aware that Roderick was the last Visigothic King of Spain. No monarch ever ascended the throne under brighter auspices or with greater advantages than Roderick. He had rebelled against his predecessor Witiza, who was a detestable voluptuary and a blood-thirsty tyrant, and whom the indignation of his people hurled from the royal seat which he disgraced. By universal acclaim was Roderick, the chief of this most righteous rebellion, raised to the throne; and for a short period he ruled honourably, mercifully, and justly. But soon falling into the same course of dissipation which had proved the ruin of his predecessor, he lost his good renown amongst the Spaniards; and he became both a voluptuary and tyrant in his turn.

“The seduction of Count Juliano’s daughter, the beautiful Florinda La Cava, was an act accompanied by many circumstances of unparalleled atrocity. For Florinda was entrusted to his guardianship by her father, Count Juliano, who was absent in Africa, fighting against the Moors. And, besides, having ruined the unfortunate lady, Roderick refused to marry her and espoused another. But still Florinda remained in the palace as his acknowledged mistress. One day the king gave a grand banquet to all the lords and ladies of his voluptuous court, which he at that period held in the city of Toledo. The queen, broken-hearted at his inconstancy, remained in the solitude of her own apartment, but her place at the festal board was occupied by Florinda La Cava.

When the wine had circulated freely, the conversation turned upon the castles, towers, and ancient buildings of Spain.

“Many marvellous legends were recited concerning them; and the cause, which laid several under the spells of enchantment, were duly narrated. Most of these legends were in metrical measure, and when poured forth in the harmony of female voices, they served as a delicious and exciting minstrelsy for that harmonious scene. Presently, an old lord, who appears to have been somewhat more sedate and serious-minded than the other revellers, although not sufficiently so to induce him to remain absent from the festal occasion, observed that no one had as yet uttered a word in explanation of the mysteries attached to the tower which was built upon the heights overlooking Toledo.

“All seemed struck by the remark, and a damp was suddenly thrown upon the spirits of the guests. For the tower alluded to, was one of the most ancient in the kingdom. There were no records of when, by whom, or wherefore it was built—and it was not only uninhabited, but no person was known who had ever penetrated into it. There was but one entrance, and this contained an enormous door, fastened by a huge padlock hanging outside. Rumours had from time to time declared that individuals of daring spirit or desperate fortunes had endeavoured to enter the tower—some prompted by curiosity, and others by the hope of finding treasures heaped up within. But no key had been found to open the lock—no arm strong enough to force the door. It was likewise believed that ill fortune attached itself to the persons who thus sought to enter the tower, and that

they all died prematurely, for the most part overtaken by violent deaths. The mention, therefore, of this mysterious structure was well calculated to throw a damp upon the spirits of the guests at King Roderick's banqueting board—especially as there was a vague and undefined belief abroad that the mysteries contained in the tower, whatever they might be, were connected, not so much with the fortunes of any individual family, as with the destiny of the entire Spanish nation. But Don Roderick, who had drunk more deeply of wine than any one present at the feast, and who also sought every opportunity of displaying his courage in the eyes of the lovely Florinda La Cava, suddenly started from his enthroned seat, exclaiming, "By heaven! I will visit the tower this night. Let those who will, accompany me!"

"A superstitious dismay for a moment seized upon the assembled lords and ladies. But when this consternation had somewhat subsided, they crowded around the king, beseeching him not to carry his rash project into effect. Florinda herself shed tears at the thought of the unknown danger into which he might be running headlong; but nothing could change the monarch's purpose—no one could dissuade him against the enterprise.

"He was heated with wine. Moreover, a burning curiosity was kindled in his breast—and he denounced all his male guests as cowards who should refuse to accompany him. At that taunt, every lord and knight proclaimed the utmost readiness to attend upon the monarch, and commands were forthwith issued to the grooms to prepare horses for the expedition."

Here Gonzalez Andujar paused

for a few moments to take breath, and Malagamba pressed more closely to the side of Kiamil. In addition to her superstitious fears, which were enhanced by this narrative, she had conceived, within the last few minutes, a vague suspicion and unaccountable dislike relative to the dervish, whose countenance she had been furtively contemplating. But she made no audible remark; and Gonzalez Andujar resumed his narrative.

"It was night-time when Don Roderick and his courtiers, attended by several pages bearing torches, set out upon their expedition to the tower, and as the cavalcade passed through the streets of Toledo, and the object of the enterprise became known, a panic-terror seized upon the inhabitants. Several priests and old men threw themselves upon their knees in the king's path, and besought him not to pursue an adventure which, as their prescient fears assured them, would only bring down unheard-of calamities upon the whole nation. But the monarch, though struck by these solemn warnings, was too obstinate to yield to their influence. He felt that he should not dare encounter Florinda's looks, if he returned into her presence branded as a coward. He therefore disregarded all entreaties, prayers, and presages, and hastened onward at the head of his courtiers.

"The affrighted warders lowered the drawbridge at the gates of Toledo—and the brilliant cavaclade whose plumes, jewels, weapons, and rich dresses shone in the glare of the torch-light, dashed forth into the main-road. Thence they struck into a pathway leading towards the tower, the entrance of which they reached precisely at midnight. Dismounting from their steeds, and consigning the reins to the pages,

the king and his courtiers gathered about the massive door and one of the strongest and bravest knights essayed a number of keys which they had brought with them.

"But all was of no avail. The bolt of the ponderous padlock seemed to remain immovable. At length Don Roderick, impatient of the delay, struck the padlock a terrific blow with the hilt of his sword, and while the former was dashed to the ground, the weapon was broken in twain.

"This was considered an evil omen; and the excitement which the rapid ride had hitherto sustained, dying away, a cloud fell upon every countenance save that of the king. Pushing open the door, he entered a magnificently furnished hall, followed by his courtiers, who now carried the torches—the pages remaining in charge of the steeds.

"No living being appeared in the hall, which did not however seem to have been long deserted: for the carpets, draperies, and furniture were in excellent order and showed no sign of neglect. Traversing the hall, the king and his courtiers began to ascend a flight of stone steps,—when a terrible din, echoing through the tower, fell upon their ears. Palsied with consternation, they stopped and listened. The noise continued, resembling the rapid succession of tremendous blows struck with some ponderous instrument on a marble floor, or the incessant beatings of a battering-ram against a massive wall. Solid as the tower evidently was, and firmly built, with its foundations deeply embedded in the rock, it nevertheless shook to its very basis; and yet the rapidity and violence of the portentous sounds continued to increase.

"Invoking his patron saint to guard him, the king pursued his

way; and the courtiers, gathering courage from their monarch's example, followed close behind him. In this manner they advanced towards a door whence the appalling din evidently proceeded for it grew louder and more deafening the nearer they approached. Pushing open that door, and seizing a torch from one of his courtiers, Don Roderick entered a spacious apartment; and the rapid glance which he instantaneously threw around, showed him the cause of the din.

"For in each corner of the apartment stood a black marble statue of a Gothic warrior; and all four were beating the marble pavement with the butts of their ponderous spears. In the centre of the apartment, upon a pedestal, stood the colossal bust of a monk, sculptured likewise from a block of dark marble."

Here Joan and Berthold once more exchanged rapid glances of deep meaning. But these looks of intelligence passed unnoticed by the others present—unless, indeed, they were observed by the dervish, whose eyes were so concealed under his shaggy brows that it was difficult to know in which direction they were gazing.

"Oh! to think that we should be in this fearful place!" whispered Malagamba shudderingly to Kiamil. "And if those statues should again beat the marble floor with their spears, I feel that I should fall down dead or else go mad with terror."

"Let us hope that the spell of enchantment is indeed dissolved," returned Kiamil, also speaking in a low voice, as his arm circled Malagamba's waist, and her head rested on his shoulder.

"There is no cause for terror," said Gonzalez Andujar, who noticed

ed these whisperings between the Africans and judged of their alarms by their looks. "Everything is much exaggerated in legendary lore; and you may rest assured that if the four statues did really move their spears, it was through some hidden mechanism, designed for a deep ulterior purpose."

"Ah! did not the skeleton raise its arm with the javelin grasped in its fleshless hand?" whispered Joan in a hurried voice to Berthold. "My eyes did not deceive me in that incident, which I duly related to you:—and for what purpose could any hidden mechanism have been contrived there?"

"Let us attend to the conclusion of this most wondrous legend," whispered Berthold, observing that Gonzalez Andujar was about to proceed with his narrative.

"But the statues of the Gothic warriors and the Marble Head were not the only objects of interest in that apartment," continued the outlaw of the Sierras: "suits of armour were suspended to the walls—ghastly instruments of torture were arranged upon the floor—and on a table was spread a brilliant and curious assortment of jewellery, perfume-boxes, and various articles for the female toilette."

An ejaculation of astonishment now burst from Joan's lips: for the legend of the Tower of Don Roderick appeared to be more and more intimately connecting itself with the mysteries of Calatrava Castle. Gonzalez Andujar did not however pause in his narrative on account of that cry of amazement—for he attributed it only to the interest and curiosity excited by the tale, and not to any more important cause.

"All those objects which I have mentioned," he continued, "were embraced by the wandering Don

Roderick at a glance: and as he proceeded farther into the room, the four statues gradually relaxed in the violence of the blows which they dealt upon the marble floor, until they ceased altogether. The courtiers followed the king into the apartment, and were as much surprised at what they saw as he himself could have been. And assuredly they were far more terrified. But no tongue can describe the extent of that mortal alarm which seized upon the lords and knights, when a voice, deep and solemn as such a voice must be when issuing from a marble throat, came from the lips of the Enchanted Head."

"It spoke?" ejaculated Joan, starting visibly.

"Allah in his mercy shield us!" moaned Malagamba, nestling still closer in Kiamil's bosom.

"Yes—the Enchanted Head spoke," continued Gonzalez Andujar: "at least, so says the legend—and it is the legend, remember, which I am relating to you. The image spoke, therefore; and its words were somewhat to this effect:—

"From my lips of marble go forth words that are winged with fire; and my tongue, though cold as the winter's ice, utters syllables that are vivid and scorching as the lightning shaft. And the words that I sent forth and the syllables that I utter, are chronicled in a book which shall endure throughout all seasons, and exist throughout all time. For I am the first Marble Head that ever spoken in the words of wisdom; and to none other carved image shall such faculty of speech be again accorded. Behold in me the first and the last."

"The words are the same which I read in the Gothic volume at

Calatrava Castle," whispered Joan in a hurried and scarcely audible voice to Berthold. "Heavens! it seems as if the revelation of a mystery were passing before me—as if the elucidation of deep darkness were at hand."

"The destinies that rule you, my Joan, are evidently most strange and wonderful," was the reply gently breathed by Berthold.

"The lords and knights," continued Gonzalez Andujar, "fell back in mortal dismay, as the Enchanted Head thus spoke: but Don Roderick stood firm, gazing upon the wondrous image and drinking in its words. After a short pause, it spoke again.

"*Thou hast committed a vile and abhorrent act, O King! and yet there is a reparation which thou canst make. The shame of Florinda La Cava will produce shame to thee: her dis-honour shall redound upon thy own head. Unless, indeed,*" continued the image, in a still more serious and impressive tone, "*thou dost follow the commands which I am about to give thee.*" The head ceased for a moment and then proceeded to issue its instructions. '*Thou art ordered to take hence and convey to thy palace in Toledo, the instruments of torture which thou seest around, the armour hanging to the walls, and the costly articles spread upon the table. Thou wilt repudiate thy present Queen and take Florinda as thy bride. The lords and knights of thy Court, who shall oppose thy sovereign pleasure in this proceeding, thou wilt subject to the instruments of torture. Thy bridal with Florinda must take place on the third day hence; and immediately afterwards thou and thy faithful lords and knights will put on the armour; while*

Florinda, her ladies, and her handmaidens shall decorate themselves with the ornaments spread out upon yon table. In this manner will ye all sit down to the grand banquet that shall be prepared to commemorate the occasion. But take heed that the armour and the jewels be not used, nor the perfume-boxes opened, until the proper moment arrives; and at a given hour shall the courtiers don the armour and the ladies repair to their toilette. For there is a spell alike upon the armour and the jewels; and it will accomplish the happiness of those to whose lot they may fall. I have now spoken: and my lips become sealed again.

"Such were the instructions of the Enchanted Head; and Don Roderick, carried away by the influence of superstitious awe, at once testified his resolve to obey them. He ordered the armour to be packed together—the jewels and toilette-articles to be carefully enveloped in the rich scarf which he took from his own shoulders—and the engines of torture to be likewise removed from the apartment.

"The lords and knights were compelled to work at this task; but it was requisite to summon as many of the pages as could be spread from tending the horses, to assist in removing the heavier objects. To be brief, the armour, the implements of torture, and the jewels, were all carried forth from the apartment; and the instant Don Roderick, who was the last to leave that terrible place, crossed the threshold, the four statues began to beat the marble flour as violently as at first—so that there was no one individual belonging to the royal party who did not breathe more freely when the outside of the mystic tower was gained.

The huge portal is said to have shut of its own accord, and the cavalcade returned to the palace at Toledo, conveying thither all the objects brought from the enchanted tower."

"But King Roderick failed to fulfil the instructions of the Marble Head—did he not?" inquired Joan: "for it does not appear that he ever repudiated his queen or espoused Florinda La Cava."

"The sequel may be told in a few words," answered Gonzalez Andujar. "So marvellous an adventure could not be kept concealed from the inhabitants of Toledo. Too many persons had been witnesses of the occurrence and had heard the instructions of the Marble Head, to render implicit secrecy possible. The presence of the instruments of torture in the palace alarmed the courtiers generally; and the queen had many friends. The public spirit was aroused against Don Roderick, and it was openly declared that the whole proceeding at the tower was nothing more than an artfully arranged stratagem on his part as an excuse to divorce his queen and put certain obnoxious nobles to death.

"A rebellion was imminent, and he was forced to publish a proclamation to the effect that he would not obey the commands of the Marble Head. The people were appeased—the armour, the instruments of torture, and the jewels were locked up in a room at the palace, and in a short time the incident was forgotten in the renewed gaieties and festivities of the court. These were interrupted by the death of the queen; and when the period of mourning had expired, Count Juliano appeared in the presence of the king and demanded that he should espouse his dishonoured

daughter. But Roderick's hasty temper revolted against anything in the form of dictation; and he peremptorily refused. The Count then left him—departed for Africa—made his compact with the Moors—and introduced them into Spain. Such is the Legend of Don Roderick's Tower."

"But what became of the Marble Head, the armour, the torture-implements, and the jewels?" asked Malagamba, who experienced a deep and awful interest in the tale.

"I know not," responded the outlaw of the Sierras. "The legend says nothing upon that subject."

Joan and Berthold again threw significant looks at each other, as much as to imply that they could throw some light upon the point if they dared. But believing as they did, that all the objects alluded to were contained in the secret apartments, of Calatrava Castle, they were profoundly amazed, and indeed struck with complete bewilderment, when the venerable dervish, who had hitherto maintained a deep silence during the progress of the tale, spoke as follows:—

"This tower has oft-times afforded me shelter; and there is not a nook or corner of the ruins with which I am unacquainted. When I was younger and more active, as well as more curious, I was wont to explore the building: and it was my lot to discover a secret communication with certain chambers below the one which you are now visited, and which contains the statues. Under the pedestal in that apartment there is a staircase; and in one of the rooms to which it leads down, may at this moment be seen the Marble Head, some pieces of armour covered with rust, several engines of torture, and various jewels dimmed and faded. Doubtless they must be the same

of which the legend speaks; but how they came there, I know not."

While the dervish was thus speaking, Gonzalez Andujar, Kiamil, and Malagamba surveyed him with the deepest interest; but Joan and Berthold gazed upon him with a wonderment that can easily be understood by the reader. For if the objects mentioned were actually and positively at the moment in the tower, there must be another and similar set of them at Calatrava Castle. But how was this belief to be reconciled with the fact that should there be two marble heads, each one proclaimed itself to be the only enchanted image ever endowed with the faculty of speech?"

We must likewise observe that although Malagamba gazed upon the dervish with a superstitious interest mingled with awe, there was in her feelings at the same time that under-current of dislike and suspicion with regard to him which has already been noticed. She could not account for this sentiment—neither could she control it—and as she fixed her eyes upon the dervish, she clung close to Kiamil with a vague and undefined yearning for protection against some evil, which she believed to be imminent, but which floated with shadowy, dimness in her imagination.

"Let us penetrate into those secret chambers and view the objects of interest which they contain!" said Gonzalez Andujar suddenly starting to his feet.

"Yes—let us gratify our curiosity in that respect," said Joan; and the Abbot of Fulda instantaneously echoed the proposition.

"No—do not go—I beseech you not to go. General!" cried Malagamba, springing forward and seizing Gonzalez Andujar by the arm. "And you, lady," she exclaimed,

turning her eyes imploringly upon Joan; "do not go! Nor you, senor," she added, her looks glancing from our heroine to Berthold: "do not go!"

Kiamil remained anxiously watching the effect which his wife's entreaties would produce: and, though he said nothing, he evidently shared in the vague and undefined terrors which influenced her.

"Malagamba, this is foolish," observed Gonzalez Andujar, mildly. "Your fears are without foundation: at the same time, I do not mean to upbraid you for your good intentions. Remain here with Kiamil—and we will explore the mysteries of the tower.

The negress shrank back, trembling and disheartened; but the habit of obedience in which she had been reared, prevented her from urging any farther prayer or remonstrance.

Gonzalez Andujar took the lamp in his hand, observing that the blazing logs upon the hearth would light the chamber sufficiently until his return—and followed by the dervish, Berthold, and Joan, he issued from the room.

Joan paused an instant to say a few encouraging words to Malagamba, in order to alleviate her fears. But the negress, suddenly grasping her hand, fixed her large black eyes, earnestly upon her countenance, and said in a hurried whisper, "Beware of that dervish!"

Joan started with astonishment at this strange warning, but perceiving that Malagamba had no reason to assign for uttering it she naturally attributed it to mere vague and unfounded terror, and hastened out of the room.

CHAPTER XLVII

SEQUEL OF THE ADVENTURES
AT THE TOWER

GONZALEZ ANDUJAR, holding the lamp, and followed by the Moorish dervish, Berthold, and Joan, proceeded along the stone corridor, and entered the apartment containing the four statues.

Our heroine now bent her eyes fixedly upon the dervish and examined his countenance—or rather as much of it as the mass of hair left unconcealed—with the utmost attention. Nevertheless, this scrutiny she managed with sufficient caution and furtiveness to avoid attracting his notice. But she could see nothing in his looks to warrant the suspicion evidently entertained concerning him by Malagamba; and her opinion, that the warning given by the negress had arisen from unfounded fear, continued unchanged.

Before proceeding to remove the pedestal, Gonzalez Andujar once more examined the black marble statues with interest and attention. We have already stated that they were encrusted with dirt, but still their sculptural proportions could be sufficiently distinguished to show that they had been chiselled by no inexperienced hand. The huge lances which they held in their grasp, and the butts of which rested upon the floor, were of iron; and it was easy to conceive that if those weapons really could be lifted by the marble arms which sustained them, or by means of any hidden mechanism, they were capable of dealing terrific blows upon the pavement.

This pavement itself was so covered with the accumulated dust, which had formed into a thick crust, that it was entirely concealed. But

Gonzalez Andujar scraped away a portion of that concrete dirt with the point of his dagger—and the veined marble of which the floor was composed, then became apparent.

Having thus far gratified his curiosity, Gonzalez Andujar gave the lamp to Berthold, and again approached one of the statues. Grasping the massive lance, he endeavoured to lift it, in order to ascertain whether the arm of the figure and the weapon which its gauntleted hand grasped were susceptible of motion.

But he might as well have attempted to shake the rock on which the tower itself was built, as move the statue.

"If there be any hidden machinery to raise the arm," he observed, "it must either be so rusted as to remain fixed, or else be held fast by some secret spring. We will now pursue our investigations into the mysteries of this tower."

"You are stronger than I, General Andujar," said the dervish; "and can remove this pedestal. Twenty years ago, I experienced not much difficulty in overturning it: but my arms have become enfeebled with age—and my strength is departing."

The outlaw of the Sierras stooped down and enfolded the pedestal in his muscular arms—then, with a sudden effort, he hurled it over—and as it fell on its side it revealed an aperture in the pavement, large enough for a stout person to pass through.

On holding the lamp above this opening, a steep flight of narrow stone steps was discovered: and the dervish at once proffered to lead the way, as he had explored the place on many previous occasions.

Joan was secretly pleased that

the Moor thus undertook to proceed first, as it appeared a guarantee of his harmless intentions. But now that she and her companions were on the point of entrusting themselves to the guidance of a stranger, and in a place to which such remarkable tales were attached, she could not help feeling somewhat more forcible than at first the solemn earnestness of that warning which Malagamba had given her.

She did not however choose to whisper a word upon the subject to either Berthold Neckar or Gonzalez Andujar, lest she should seem to share in the unaccountable and perhaps unfounded alarms of the negress; but she resolved to keep a close watch upon every look and movement of the dervish.

The party went down the narrow stone staircase; and by the heaviness of the atmosphere it was evident that the rooms below were not provided with windows. But they had no opportunity of examining the place into which they descended: for scarcely had they all four reached the bottom of the steps, when the lamp was suddenly dashed out of the hands of Gonzalez Andujar—total darkness instantaneously ensued—a shriek burst from Joan's lips—the rush of many footsteps was heard—a door closed violently—and then all was still.

Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold had both precipitated themselves in the direction which that rush of footsteps seemed to take, but the whole proceeding was so suddenly and so promptly executed, that they failed to grasp hold of any one—and the door was slammed against them.

The noise of a massive bolt being drawn on the other side fell upon their ears; and as they stood still for a few moments transfixed with

astonishment, a dead silence prevailed.

“Joan—where art thou, Joan?” cried Berthold, awakening from that stupor of dismay to the anguish of a poignant suspense.

But no voice responded to his summons—and he uttered a cry of acute grief.

“What fiendish treachery is this?” exclaimed Andujar: and groping his way to the staircase, he rushed up the steps to prevent the aperture being secured against them;—but his outstretched arms came in contact with a massive stone—probably the pedestal—which closed the opening overhead, and which he vainly endeavoured to move.

“We are betrayed,” he said, descending the steps once more. “But what can all this mean?—who is the treacherous dervish?”

“Alas! alas!” ejaculated Berthold, in a voice of bitter anguish: “had we listened to the earnest entreaties of Malagamba, this would not have happened!”

“Do not despair, my dear friend,” said Gonzalez Andujar. “You and the Lady Joan have both been involved in greater danger than any which now seems to threaten you—and as for myself, I am so accustomed to perils of all kinds, that they scarcely ruffle me. But when I bethink me, I have about my person the means of procuring a light, if the oil be not all escaped from the lamp.”

Thus speaking, Gonzalez Andujar groped about for the lamp, which he soon found; and having obtained a light he discovered that it had fallen on its side and still contained a small portion of oil.

He now began to survey the place with minute attention—while Berthold, leaning with folded arms against the wall, seemed to

have no thought for anything save his beloved Joan, who was so suddenly and so treacherously snatched away from him. Whatever doom were in store for himself he cared not: no fear had he on his own account. He had already looked death in the face, alike at Duera and when uncertain of his existence from day to day in the dungeons of Valladolid—and he shrank not now from contemplating the destroyer again. But he could not endure the thought that his beauteous mistress was once more placed in some cruel jeopardy, the motive and end of which were alike involved in so terrible an uncertainty.

While Berthold was thus wrapped up in a painful reverie as he leant against the wall with folded arms and downcast looks, Gonzalez Andujar proceeded to the examination of the place. It was a large empty apartment, with neither loop-hole nor fissure to admit the air, and having an aspect as gloomy and sombre as the interior of the most dreadful prison.

No Enchanted Head was there; neither were the instruments of torture, the suits of armour, or the jewels, under the pretence of seeing which the treacherous dervish had enticed his intended victims thither.

There being no window nor loop-hole in the apartment, the air would doubtless have been altogether stagnant and foul, were it not for the creaks and crevices in the door by which the dervish and the individuals who carried off Joan had so precipitately flown.

This door, though somewhat damaged and considerably shrunk-en by the effects of time, was nevertheless still too strong and stout to be forced by unassisted human strength; and the walls of the apartment were as hard and solid as marble.

Vainly did Gonzalez Andujar look around for some heavy object which he might convert into a battering-ram wherewith to assail the door. There was not a log of wood—nor an article of furniture—nor even a loose stone, to answer such a purpose.

“Whatever the object of this treachery may be, our imprisonment cannot last long,” he said at length. “Kiamil and Malagamba, finding that we do not return shortly, will give the alarm; and even should they become victims to the same perfidy which has overtaken ourselves, I am well assured that my brave men will never leave the tower so long as the safety of their chief remains in uncertainty. They would tear it down, stone by stone, till they reached its nethermost foundations——”

“But if this same treachery, evidently so well and deeply planned,” interrupted Berthold, “should overtake your followers—I shudder to think of what may possibly happen. The dervish cannot have entered upon the perpetration of this outrage, without full confidence in the number of his confederates to support him, and a massacre—a hideous massacre—may be the result. And, ah!” ejaculated Berthold, a sudden idea flashing across his mind, as he started from his thoughtful attitude, while his speech was now quick and excited: “that dervish may be an agent of Kara Ali——”

“Or Kara Ali himself!” added Gonzalez Andujar, struck by the thought which now gleamed in like an inspiration upon his mind.

“And poor Malagamba’s vague and undefined presentiments of evil were not without foundation!” exclaimed Berthold. “The dervish appeared to be bowed with age:

'but if his stature were erect, it would be that of Kara Áli. As for his disguise—'

"Oh! disguises are so easily assumed, but with difficulty penetrated even by those who are skilled in adopting them," observed Gonzalez Andujar. "There is however one consolation, Berthold," he added, in a serious tone,—"even if the dervish should prove to be the Black Captain of the Moorish banditti—"

"And that consolation?" cried the Abbot of Fulda, hastily, "What is it?"

"That there is no longer an archbishop of Valladolid to bargain with the Moslem marauders for the capture of the Lady Joan and yourself."

But before the Abbot of Fulda had time to make any reply to this remark of the outlaw, the sudden clatter of arms and sounds of voices, coming from overhead, reached their ears;—and then followed all the din which denoted the raging of a terrific combat.

"My brave men and the Moorish banditti are fighting together!" exclaimed Gonzalez Andujar, his countenance becoming radiant with animation and his eyes flashing fire. "Oh! that I were there to head them!"

"'Tis a furious conflict!" said Berthold, trembling with excitement. "Oh! that my beloved Joan may be safe!"

"I have little doubt as to the result of the battle, if her security and freedom depend upon that!" observed the outlaw of the Sierras. "But let us guard against any sudden attack upon ourselves from the treacherous quarter," he added, pointing towards the door: then drawing his own good sword, he handed his long dagger to Berthold.

They now remained silent and

listened, while the rage of the contest was evidently increasing in the room overhead. But though his tongue was still, yet Andujar's looks spoke even more eloquently than words could have done, of that ardent longing which his warlike soul experienced to join in the death-medley that was taking place so near. As the clash of the weapons, the din of armed men falling, and the furious turmoil of voices reached his ears, his eyes sparkled with a restless lustre—his nostrils dilated—and his breath came quickly between the lips that anxiety and suspense held apart. He resembled the war-steed that hears the clang of the trumpet in the distance—or the noble dog that pricks up its ears to the sound of the huntsman's horn.

Ten minutes thus elapsed,—ten mortal minutes that appeared an age to Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold. At length the fury of the strife relaxed—then there was a rush of feet, as of one party of the combatants flying precipitately—and the next moment the massive stone was rolled away from the aperture at the head of the staircase, and the voice of Kiamil was heard calling from above.

Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold hastened up the stone steps, and the spectacle which met their eyes at once convinced them how desperate had been the conflict. A dozen Moors were stretched lifeless upon the floors, three of Andujar's soldiers also lay dead, and two others of his escort were wounded. To these last-mentioned individuals Malgamba was administering all possible attention, and did not appear that they were at all seriously injured.

But where was Joan? Where was the dervish? Kiamil and the soldiers were painfully surprised

when they perceived that the heroine was missing, and their rage knew no bounds on hearing that she had been spirited away by the dervish and some of his confederates. An immediate examination of the tower was therefore instituted. Again descending into the room below, Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold led the way, upwards of a dozen of the soldiers following, while others hastened to inspect the exterior of the building in order to ascertain if there were any means of egress besides the principal entrance.

The battle-axes of the warriors soon demolished the door by which Joan had been carried off; and the party now descended another flight of stone-steps, at the bottom of which a second door opened into a spacious room where an iron lamp, suspended to the vaulted roof, was burning.

The floor was strewn with fresh rushes—several articles of Moorish apparel lay scattered about—and on a table appeared flagons and drinking-cups. It was therefore evident that Roderick's Tower was in reality a haunt and stronghold for Kara Ali's banditti—Kiamil having already informed Gonzalez Andujar that they were the Black Captain's men with whom the Asturians had fought in the chamber above.

At the end of the room which the explorers were now inspecting was a circular staircase leading to the apartment overhead: and in a recess another door was observed. Opening this door, which was unfastened, the party descended a few steps, which brought them into a subterranean gallery fitted up as stables. The stalls were capable of accommodating sixty or seventy horses; and there were upwards of thirty noble-looking steeds in them

at that moment. A door at the farther extremity stood open; and on approaching it, Gonzalez Andujar and his companions discovered that it communicated with a narrow pathway cut out of the solid rock which rose to the height of twelve or fourteen feet on either side.

It now became tolerably evident that Joan had been carried off by this means of egress from the tower; and Gonzalez Andujar, Berthold, and the soldiers who were with them instantaneously took the banditti's horses, as being nearer a hand than their own, and hurried away in pursuit.

The path went shelving down amidst the rocks and crags till it joined the main-road, and from some benighted travellers whom they overtook, they learnt that half-a-dozen mounted Moors, with a lady amongst them, had recently passed that way in the direction of Toledo.

Meantime Kiamil, who had been left behind to inform the remaining soldiers of their chief's temporary absence, retraced his way through the stables, and on entering the room where the banditti were wont to hold their orgies, he ascended the circular staircase already alluded to. The mouth was closed by a thick wooden trap-door which he raised; and he found, as he had indeed suspected, that these steps led up to the large apartment containing the statues and where the conflict had taken place.

The soldiers who had been despatched to explore the exterior of the tower, had in the meantime clambered over the crags surrounding its base, until they were stopped by what appeared to them a deep trench, but which was in reality the pathway already de-

scribed as being cut amidst the rocks.

Unable to ascertain its real nature or even to penetrate with their looks to the bottom, in the uncertain moonlight, they retraced their way to the principal entrance, where they were shortly joined by Kiamil, who informed them of the discovery of a secret issue from the tower, and of their chief's departure in company with Berthold and their comrades.

We need scarcely observe that Malagamba was inconsolable for the loss of Joan, towards whom she experienced the profoundest attachment. Kiamil was equally afflicted: and neither of them entertained much hope that the pursuit of Gonzalez Andujar would prove successful.

That the dervish was none other than Kara Ali, they were now well assured: and although his disguise was so complete as to defy their scrutiny at the time, they were no longer at a loss to comprehend those vague suspicions and undefined misgivings that first sprang up in the bosom of Malagamba, and the infection of which was subsequently caught by Kiamil.

The morning had begun to dawn when Gonzalez Andujar, Berthold and their followers returned to Don Roderick's Tower, after a long and fruitless search. They had beaten about the entire district all round Toledo; but every effort and inquiry had proved vain and ineffectual.

The outlaw of the Sierras was deeply grieved—Berthold's affliction can be better imagined than described—and the soldiers themselves shared in the gloom thus occasioned by the loss of a lady whose heroic character, generous disposition, and kind heart had endeared her to the whole troop.

Kiamil and Malagamba had not retired to rest when the party thus returned from its fruitless search: and they now entered into detailed explanations of what had occurred immediately previous to the combat between the Moorish banditti and the Asturians.

It appeared that when Andujar, the dervish, Joan, and Berthold had left Kiamil and Malagamba in the chamber, as described at the close of the preceding chapter, so excruciating became the anguish of those misgivings which rent the bosom of the faithful negress, that she besought her husband to descend into the hall and conjure the soldiers to be upon their guard, as some treachery was apprehended.

At the event proved, this warning was indeed most valuable and timeous, for without it, a wholesale massacre would have doubtless taken place amongst the Asturians, who were settling themselves to slumber, unconscious of impending danger. But as Kiamil was retracing his way to the chamber where he had left Malagamba, a scream and cry for help reached his ears: and recognising the voice of his wife in those accents of distress, he called to the soldiers to follow him. Then, drawing his scimitar, he rushed onward—and found the stone corridor filled with Moors, whom by their garb he instantly knew to be Kara Ali's men.

Some of them were already hurrying Malagamba away towards the large apartment containing the statues: but when Kiamil made his appearance at the head of Gonzalez Andujar's soldiers, the Moors, abandoning the negress, all retreated rapidly into, that apartment, the door of which they endeavoured to close.

But Kiamil and his companions were too quick upon them: and

bursting into the room, they commenced an attack upon the banditti.

At the same instant that the door was thus forced open, a heavy sound like that of a trap-door suddenly closing fell upon Kiamil's ear—hence the suspicion which he subsequently entertained that the circular staircase below communicated with some trap-door in that apartment.

A glance also showed him that the pedestal was still in the same place where he had seen it when the first visit was paid to this apartment. But he had no time to reflect upon the probable snare into which Andujar, Berthold, and Joan had been enticed by the false dervish—for the conflict was nowraging furiously.

Kiamil himself performed no mean part in this encounter. His scimitar did deadly work amongst the Moors—and, as we have seen, they lost twelve of their men and were forced to beat a precipitate retreat.

Malagamba, who in the meantime had remained trembling with terror in one of the little chambers opening from the corridor, now proceeded to the scene of the conflict to attend upon the wounded. The victorious Asturians did not think it worth while to pursue the routed banditti farther than the hall at the entrance of the tower, whither some of them followed merely for the purpose of preventing the fugitives from making free with the horses that were stabled there.

The victory being thus gained over the Moslems, whose intention no doubt was to carry off Malagamba and massacre all the rest of Gonzalez Andujar's party, Kiamil proceeded to overturn the pedestal from its setting. The aperture

was then disclosed—and the liberation of Gonzalez and Berthold was effected. What followed thereupon is already known to the reader.

Having taken a few hours' rest, the party quitted Don Roderick's Tower, and resumed its journey—Berthold deriving some consolation, in the bitterness of his sorrow, from the belief that a secret and supernatural power watched over the safety of his beloved Joan, and that in the midst of apparently the most hopeless circumstances succour would reach her as heretofore.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

BUT let us return to the dervish in order to explain the occurrences which have just taken place.

This treacherous individual was indeed none other than Kara Ali. At the time that Gonzalez Andujar's party were riding along the road from Madrid to Toledo, the Black Captain was concealed, with a number of his men, in that same great forest where he had attacked the procession of virgins, and where Berthold and Algenora were carried off, about a month previously. The reader may rest assured that Kara Ali and his horde were stationed in that forest for no good purpose—indeed, they were watching their opportunity to pounce upon any wealthy-looking stragglers of the countless numbers that were journeying southward.

On beholding Gonzalez Andujar's well appointed party, and recognising Joan, Berthold, Malagamba, and Kiamil, the Black Captain became greatly excited. Nor was this feeling diminished when one of his men, who had recently

been sent as a spy to Valladolid to ascertain the fate of Saad the hostage, assured him that the leader of the cavalcade was none other than the redoubtable Gonzalez Andujar himself. Now Kara Ali was still smarting under the defeat which he had experienced at the hands of Madoz, the outlaw's lieutenant; and he also remembered the cutting message which the outlaw himself had once sent him in reply to his challenge of mortal combat. He was therefore a sworn enemy to Gonzalez Andujar.

Against Berthold he had no particular feeling of rancour, unless it were that he sympathetically hated every one who was on friendly terms with the outlaw. But he had certain grave and important reasons for being most anxious to get Joan Gilbertus into his hands once again. He likewise longed to recover possession of his fugitive slave Malagamba, whose flight had deeply angered him; and he was still more anxious to be able to wreak his vengeance upon Kiamil, who had aided in the escape of the negress and Joan from the cavern amidst the fastnesses of Buytrago.

All these motives were too strong to allow Kara Ali to neglect the present opportunity of practising his treachery towards Gonzalez Andujar's party. He would have bravely and openly attacked the cavalcade then and there, had not the road been swarming with travellers who would have all united to make common cause against the banditti. He therefore resolved to have recourse to stratagem; and disguising himself as a venerable-looking dervish, he galloped on through the hidden pathways of the forest so as to get

considerably a-head of Gonzalez Andujar's party.

Then, despatching his men to Don Roderick's Tower, which had long served as one of his strongholds and stable-stations, he sat down by the road-side, trusting to the chapter of accidents to furnish an opportunity for the execution of his vindictive schemes.

We have seen how fortune favoured his designs, and how admirably he succeeded in enticing the whole party to the Tower.

Once safely lodged there, he felt assured in his own mind that they were completely in his hands. His first thought was to wait until they were all asleep, and then fetch up his men from their ambush to make prisoners or massacre according as he should point out. But he more or less dreaded the military habit of watchfulness and caution on the part of Andujar; and the interest excited by the legend which the outlaw related, suggested the idea of alluring him into one of the chambers where he might be held captive.

Kara Ali knew that his bandit followers would be upon the alert in every one of the secret apartments below; and he therefore put into execution the scheme which has already been related.

On descending first into the room beneath the apartment of the four statues, he instantaneously caught a glimpse of some of his men standing at the open door.

Dashing the lamp from Gonzalez Andujar's hand he seized upon Joan—bore her from the room—thrust her amongst his men—and closed the door ere the outlaw or Berthold had time to follow. Already, at the first moment the men in that room had heard the pedestal overturned above, one of them had sped to the circular

staircase ; and passing by means of the trap-door into the chamber of the four statues, he replaced the pedestal over the opening. Then, while Kara Ali, throwing off his disguise, commanded half-a-dozen of his men to accompany him, as he hurried Joan away on horseback by means of the pathway hewn amongst the rocks,—the remainder of the band passed up the circular staircase to seize upon Malagamba and Kiamil, and massacre the Asturian soldiers.

They were however frustrated in their design, and retreating into the chamber of the four statues, as already described, they instantaneously shut down the trap-door, so as to conceal the secret means of communication with their own rooms below.

Then followed the conflict, in which they were so completely routed ; and it was only by a precipitate retreat that the survivors managed to escape with their lives.

But in the meantime Kara Ali and a few of his followers were hurrying Joan away from Don Roderick's Tower by means of the path amidst the rocks. —The reader can picture to himself the astonishment and dismay of Joan when the dervish, throwing off his gown—tearing away his false hair—and passing a wet towel over his countenance to wash off the sallow dye—revealed himself in all the terrible aspect of Kara Ali.

But she had little time for reflection, in the hurry with which her departure was now conducted. Nevertheless, as she wended her involuntary way, amidst the bandit escort, down the shelving path, she could not help sighing in regret at not having paid more attention to the warning so emphatically given by Malagamba.

On gaining the main road, the party pursued it for a short distance—not more than a couple of hundred yards, but as there were a few benighted travellers pursuing their way towards Toledo, Kara Ali thought fit to inform Joan "that if she attempted to raise an alarm or invoke assistance, he should at once adopt a summary measure to silence her—namely, the introduction of a gag between her beautiful teeth."

To this threat, delivered with coarse brutality, our heroine made no reply. But not choosing to undergo menaced outrage, which she knew Kara Ali to be perfectly capable of inflicting, she held her peace.

In a few minutes the party turned into a byeroad, which was lonely and deserted ; and thus passing round the outskirts of Toledo, they continued their way through fields and woods in a southern direction.

Joan put no queries to Kara Ali.

She was well aware that he would of his own accord communicate anything he chose to impart, and that no interrogatory would elicit from him aught that he wished to conceal. That she was profoundly afflicted at being torn from Berthold, the reader does not require to be informed ; and that she was very uneasy on his account, may be also imagined. Nor less was she bewildered with conjectures as to the meaning of her present abduction.

That the Black Captain cherished no very friendly feeling towards herself and her late companions, she could readily conceive ; and that he should endeavour to avenge himself for past occurrences, was also to be expected from such a man. But that he should tear her thus away from the rest—hurry her off in this

precipitate manner—and not remain behind to wreak his spite on those who had offended him more grievously than she could possibly have done,—all this was perplexing and bewildering in the extreme.

In the middle of the night the party halted at a cottage, where Joan was conducted by an old woman to a chamber.

Refreshments were supplied her, and she was informed that it was proposed to halt there for a few hours. Much exhausted, she soon fell asleep, and slumbered undisturbed until the sun had risen. The old woman then aroused her—a comfortable repast was served up—and the journey was resumed along bye-lanes and over the fields. In the afternoon the party halted at a ruin in the vicinage of a place which, as Joan understood from some remarks made by the banditti, was called Hornillo; and, fresh steeds being procured, the journey was continued at sunset.

It was near midnight when the party stopped to rest until morning.

This time the halt took place at a cavern, which was divided into several compartments like the one amidst the mountainous passes near Buytrago on the Moorish frontier. Joan was allowed a chamber to herself: and in no respect was she treated with any indignity. But hitherto not a word of explanation had been vouchsafed as to the aim and purport of this hurried journey; and she was still at a loss to conceive where or how it was destined to terminate.

At noon on the second day the party halted amidst the mountainous districts in the neighbourhood of Almaden—those districts which in more recent periods have become so celebrated for their quicksilver mines. There the halt took place at a ruined watch-tower, and

one of the banditti was sent into Almaden to purchase wine and provisions.

On his return, the liquor proved so much to the Black Captain's taste, that he drank more than he was accustomed to allow himself while travelling in this manner and having important business in hand, and the result of his potations was to remove from his lips the seal which he had hitherto so religiously maintained upon them with regard to Joan. In plainer terms, he now condescended to speak to her, as the party sate at their meal amidst the ruin of the watch-tower.

"Doubtless you are most anxious to learn, Christian lady, whither you are bound thus hurriedly?" he said, with a malignant smile. "But you are accustomed to take long and rapid journeys under the agreeable escort of Kara Ali's band," he added, chuckling coarsely.

"And whither am I bound, then?" asked Joan, assuming a quiet and unconcerned manner as she spoke.

"That is the mystery of mysteries!" exclaimed the Black Captain, now laughing heartily. "By the prophet! you will be surprised. But I shall keep you in suspense, because I owe you a grudge for escaping from me at the cavern in the frontier-mountains. Do you know," he observed, more seriously, "that your proceeding on that occasion eventually cost me one of my best men? The faithful Saad remained at Valladolid as a hostage for your appearance in the presence of the archbishop, and the cruel prelate put him to death: But, Allah be thanked! the remorseless churchman was soon treated as he deserved, and I could almost have forgiven Gonzalez Andujar for the matters of complaint which I had against him, if it were only

because he gibbeted the archbishop."

The Black captain was running on in this manner, when a Moorish horseman was seen riding at a rapid rate towards the ruins. He came from a northern direction; and as he approached near enough to be recognised, Kara Ali exclaimed, "It is Bedreddin!"

"Was he not long with us at Roderick's Tower?" inquired one of the banditti.

"He was," responded the Black Captain, impatiently. Nor would he have come in quest of us if some evil occurrence had not taken place. What can it mean?"

By this time Bedreddin himself had come up to the spot to answer the question—and the tidings which he bore were as unwelcome to the ears of his comrades as they were fraught with joy for Joan Gilbertus. He recounted how the band had been utterly defeated at Don Roderick's Tower—how they had lost twelve of their best men—and how the remainder had been compelled to save themselves by a precipitate flight.

Our heroine inwardly put up a prayer of thanksgiving to heaven for this assurance of the safety of Berthold and his companions, and she averted her countenance to hide from the banditti the irradiation of joy which she felt to be beaming upon her features.

The rage of Kara Ali was tremendous—he launched into the bitterest invectives against what he denominated the cowardice of his men—until reminded by Bedreddin that he also had once been vanquished by a party of Gonzalez Andujar's soldiers.

This allusion to the conflict at the monastery near Fuencara, produced an immediate effect upon the Black Captain—it reduced him to

silence and covered him with confusion. Then suddenly starting to his feet, he ordered the horses to be saddled; and, without deigning to speak another word to Joan, the Black Captain gave the command for continuing the journey.

The third night was passed at a small inn where Kara Ali and his comrades were evidently well known: and the expeditious travel was resumed at sun-rise.

A little before mid-day the party stopped at a farm-house in the neighbourhood of Cusna: and after the usual leisure allowed for the noontide repast, the journey was continued again. More frequent relays of horses were now obtained, the banditti evidently having several stations in the district through which they were at present proceeding.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening of this (the third) day of the journey, that the party reached the city of Cordova. The gates were closed, but Kara Ali whispered a pass-word in the ear of the warder who appeared at the wicket—and the portals immediately unfolded their heavy wings. The travellers entered the Moorish capital, and Joan marvelled within herself—for she could not but think that Kara Ali was thus proceeding into the lion's den. They met a patrol, the Black Captain again breathed the pass-word—it acted as a talisman—and our travellers were allowed to continue their way without molestation.

Presently they reached an inn, the door of which was standing open, and Kara Ali ordered his men to halt there and await his return. He then proceeded onward with Joan, and in a few minutes another Moorish patrol was encountered.

"By the prophet! 'tis Kara Ali, the Black Captain," exclaimed

the officer in command of the constabulary force, and to whom it appeared that the bandit was personally known. "Here's a prize! —and what a treat to behold him gibbeted at the tournament."

Thus speaking, the officer grasped Kara Ali by the arm, while the patrol closed in around him and Joan to prevent them from making their escape. But the Black Captain breathed the pass-word in the officer's ear, and the effect was instantaneous.

"On our heads be it to obey that sign!" exclaimed the officer. "Stand back, comrades."

And Kara Ali, accompanied by Joan, was suffered to pass unmolested.

Our heroine had entertained serious thoughts of appealing to one of these patrols for protection against the Black Captain whom she purported to accuse of carrying her off by force and coercing her to follow him. But wonder had by this time completely taken the place of alarm and misgiving in her soul, and she was resolved to allow the adventure to pursue its own course without interruption or hindrance on her part. She therefore continued to ride on in company with the bandit, who maintained a profound silence.

Presently they turned out of a wide street which they had been pursuing, into a narrower one, and at the bottom they began to skirt a very high wall. In a few minutes they stopped at a low door, and Kara Ali, leaping from his horse, assisted Joan to dismount. Then he knocked three times with the handle of his dagger, and the door was opened by two colossal Africans, black as night, and dressed in the gorgeous apparel worn by the slaves of the wealthiest orders.

The Black Captain whispered

the pass-word, the slaves bowed—and one of them immediately took charge of the horses. Joan was then requested to enter. But she now hesitated. Misgivings sprang up thickly once more in her bosom—and the tremendous thought struck her that she was about to be conducted into the harem and betrayed into the arms of some Moorish voluptuary. She drew back—she flung a rapid glance around to estimate the chances of escape—and she was about to flee with winged feet, when Kara Ali caught her suddenly and forcibly round the waist and bore her over the threshold.

The door closed behind them—the Black Captain released her from his grasp—and the hasty look which she threw around, showed her that she was in an ante-room gorgeously furnished, but dimly lighted.

"Follow me," said the African slave, who had remained—the other having led away the steeds.

Convinced that resistance and remonstrance were alike vain, and bitterly, bitterly regretting that her romantic love of adventure had hindered her from appealing to the patrol for protection, our heroine obeyed the invitation of the gigantic black—Kara Ali following close behind her.

They passed through a long corridor, lighted with silver lamps, adorned with statues of exquisite workmanship, and scented with fragrant flowers. Thence they proceeded into a large hall, whose long narrow windows, carved ceiling, and fluted pillars displayed all the elegance of Saracenic architecture.

Next they traversed a beautiful orangery, where the golden fruit shone amidst the brilliant green, and where the pomegranate blushed with a ruddier glow. Fountains

played in crystal basins; and one immense lamp, with a globe of pink glass, diffused a roseate lustre throughout the place.

From this delicious scene Joan and Kara Ali were conducted by the colossal African into a small room where refreshments were spread upon a table, and there the Black Captain was directed to remain, the slave at the same time desiring him to partake of the comestibles at his pleasure.

This invitation the bandit chief immediately accepted—while the African threw open a door at the extremity of the room, and bade Joan pass onward.

She obeyed—but scarcely had she crossed the threshold and advanced a few steps, when the spectacle that blazed upon her sight, transfixed her to the spot with mingled amazement, bewilderment, and awe.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

SMALL wonder was it that Joan Gilbertus should thus have been dazzled and amazed by the splendour of the scene that broke—or rather burst with overwhelming glory—upon her sight. For much as she had heard and read to the magnificence, luxury, and gorgeousness of Moorish palaces, she was altogether unprepared for anything so transcendently grand and beautiful as the spacious hall into which she was now ushered.

The hall was of great height; and its roof rose into the form of an immense dome, to the centre of which was suspended a lamp contained in a globe of ground glass seven or eight feet in circumference, and shining like a ball of fire.

The interior of the dome was

studded with costly gems, which reflected the lustre as if a myriad of stars were sprinkled upon that conical roof.

The side walls of the vast apartment were covered with mirrors, in front of each of which a silver lamp was hung; and these lights were multiplied in the mirrors to a countless extent, so that the hall seemed as if it were illumined with a galaxy of planets.

The narrow intervals between the mirrors were occupied with paintings, blazonry, and various devices, all in the most brilliant and gorgeous colours; and two rows of slender crystal pillars enhanced the dazzling lustre that filled the place.

The floor was covered with a carpet woven to represent a battle-scene betwixt Moors and Christians, and in which the latter were of course shown to be flying from their Moslem enemies. This magnificent specimen of textile perfection blended the richest and gayest hues.

Between the crystal pillars stood alabaster vases filled with flowers, which seemed to have been chosen on account of their gaudy splendour, so that nothing might be wanting to sustain the magnificent appearance of the apartment in all its details.

At the farther extremity of the hall, stood a throne of gold inlaid with precious stones.

It was approached by four steps of the purest marble, white as alabaster, without the alabaster's softness; and at the end of each step was a golden jar exhaling the most delicious perfumes. Above the throne hung a canopy of crimson velvet, embroidered with gems, and the cushion of the royal seat was of the same material and similarly worked.

Upon this throne sate a person-

age whose apparel was of a richness in keeping with the splendour by which he was surrounded. On his right hand stood an elderly man dressed in gorgeous robes, and on his left were three others, whose garments were only a shade less magnificent.

Behind the throne ten black male slaves and motionless as statues, their sable countenances forming a strong contrast with the snowy whiteness of their turbans and the hues of brilliant yellow and flaming red which prevailed in their dress.

So soon as our heroine could collect her thoughts, which were thrown into confusion by the intense and overpowering splendour of the scene that thus burst upon her vision, she felt assured that she must be in the presence of the mighty Abdu-rahman, King of the Moors.

She turned, however, to inquire of the African slave who had conducted her thither, whether her surmise was correct; but he had not accompanied her into the hall—and the door was closed behind her.

Gathering all her self-possession to her aid, she advanced with modest assurance towards the throne; and on reaching the first step, she prostrated herself in the manner which she knew to be the custom at Moslem courts.

Nor was Joan in error when she believed that she was in the presence of King Abdu-rahman. The monarch was holding a council with his Ministers relative to the proceedings of the tournament which was to commence on the morrow; and the numerous matters brought forward for discussion, as well as their importance, had prolonged the deliberations until this late hour in the evening—for it was now nearly eleven o'clock.

The elderly personage who stood on the right of the throne, was the Grand Vizier, or Prime Minister, of the Kingdom; and the three who were posted on the monarch's left, were the Chief Councillors of State.

When Joan prostrated herself at the foot of the throne, the Grand Vizier said, "Who art thou, woman? and what requirest thou of the King?"

"I was brought hither by a person who waits in the ante-room," replied our heroine.

"And who is that person?" demanded the Grand Vizier.

"Kara Ali, commonly known as the Black Captain," was the response.

"Kara Ali—the bandit chief!" exclaimed Abdu-rahman, now breaking silence. Then, without a moment's hesitation, he made a signal for his ministers and slaves to withdraw.

The tacit command was immediately obeyed, the Grand Vizier, the three councillors, and the ten black slaves quitted the hall by a door which opened behind the throne—and our heroine remained alone with King Abdu-rahman.

"Rise, Christian woman," said the monarch; "and tell me wherefore thou hast been brought hither."

"I was on my way to Cordova, great king," answered Joan, as she now stood with modest dignity in the royal presence; "and should of my own accord have besought an audience of your majesty. But I was seized upon by Kara Ali—captured—torn away from my friends—and brought forcibly hither."

"This treatment which you have experienced, Christian," said Abdu-rahman, in a mild tone, "can be readily accounted for, and shall be explained presently. In the meantime, hast thou no token to display unto me—no sign to exhibit?"

"Behold, great sovereign!" answered Joan: and taking the ruby ring from her bosom, she presented it on bended knee to the Moorish monarch.

Abdu-rahman took it with evident impatience; and examining it minutely, he muttered half aloud expressions of pleasure, surprise, and comment.

"Allah is great! his ways are wonderful! Yes—this is indeed my father's ring—bestowed upon one whom he had sworn to protect and defend. And that one still lives! Allah is great—and Mohammed is his prophet! I understand the meaning of the token: my mind is enlightened as to its significance. Wonderful! wonderful! And he still lives! The pledge of a father is like a heritage unto a son: what the sire hath promised, the child is bound to fulfil. The message conveyed by this ring, is like the voice of my sire speaking from the tomb! Maledictions be upon me if I accomplish not my bounden duty in this respect! Yes—'tis my father's ring—his name is upon it. Blessed be the name of my father—may his ashes repose in peace!"

Thus murmured Abdu-rahman the Second as he scrutinised the jewel which bore the name of Abdu-rahman the First.

As Joan caught these mutterings, which were loud enough to reach her ears, she marvelled what their meaning could be. Nor less did she resolve in her mind the secret instructions given her in writing by the old man of Calatrava Castle,—especially that portion which presaged the nature of the reception she was to expect at the hands of the Moorish king.

"He will question you upon many things: and you will observe no mystery and practise no

reserve with him, but will answer truthfully and candidly, describing facts and circumstances as they have occurred. By so doing you will find favour in his sight; and he will treat you even as a brother should regard a sister, with a delicate consideration and a holy friendship. You will likewise be restored to freedom forthwith."

Such was the particular passage in the secret instructions given by the old man of Calatrava Castle, and which Joan now hastily revolved in her memory while King Abdu-rahman was examining the jewel which had evidently inspired him with so deep an interest.

Whether the promises held forth in that passage were now to be fulfilled, would soon be decided: but from the demeanour which the Moorish monarch had already shown towards her, our heroine augured favourably in that respect.

"Tell me, Christian lady," said the king, at length addressing himself once more to our heroine, "what is thy name—who thou art—and how thou camest by this ring?"

"My name is Joan Gilbertus," was the reply: "I am of the middle station in life; and although my parents were English, I am a native of Germany. That ring was entrusted to me by an old man whom I encountered under peculiar circumstances at Calatrava Castle."

"Relate those circumstances," said the king, in a kind and encouraging manner.

Our heroine accordingly detailed with much minuteness all those incidents which occurred at Calatrava Castle, and with which the reader is acquainted. She omitted nothing—extending her explanations to all that she had heard and

seen in the mysterious chambers, and describing how she was led to take Algenora's place in the procession of Virgins. She likewise narrated the manner in which Kara Ali had carried her off from the ranks of that procession—how she had subsequently remained for some time in the company of Gonzalez Andujar—and how she had been captured at Don Roderick's Tower and borne away a second time by the bandit chieftain.

The king listened with the profoundest attention to her narrative: and when she had brought it to a conclusion, he remained buried for some minutes in deep thought.

"You have every reason to believe that the old man of whom you have spoken," said his majesty, again addressing Joan, "is a prisoner in Calatrava Castle?"

"I heard that assurance from his own lips," answered our heroine. "He likewise made the same statement to Senora Tudela in the conversation which took place between them and which I have already recited to our majesty."

"But if, as you have told me, lady, this Senora Tudela was enabled to penetrate so easily into the apartments occupied by the old man, how is it that he cannot with equal felicity issue thence?"

"I received no explanation upon the point which your majesty mentions," observed Joan: "but I should imagine that, strictly speaking, the venerable patriarch is rather a prisoner within the castle itself, than in those secret apartments. It would be impossible for him to escape from the fortalice, without the knowledge or connivance of the warden Rodrigo."

"You say, Christian lady," continued the monarch, "that the mighty champion, Gonzalez Andu-

jar, is coming to Cordova to break a lance at our tournament?"

"Having escaped the treacherous designs of the bandit captain," responded Joan, "I have every reason to believe that the General must have continued his journey hither."

"We have heard of his great exploits," remarked the king, "and shall know how to give the Christian hero a fitting welcome—the more especially, inasmuch as he has behaved so chivalrously and nobly towards yourself. But I owe you some explanation, lady, for this last outrage which you personally have experienced at the hands of Kara Ali. On the arrival of the procession of Christian Virgins at my palace, I heard from the lips of a certain damsel named Isabella Rosas—"

"Poor Isabella!" murmured Joan.

"The damsel is safe, and has been well and honourably cared for," observed the king, overhearing the remark. "You shall see her if such interview will afford you any gratification."

"It would please me much, great monarch," exclaimed Joan. "During the few hours of our acquaintanceship, I conceived an affection for that amiable young lady."

"Has not a rumour reached you, that a certain Christian damsel requires a champion to appear on her behalf at the forthcoming tournament?" said the king.

"Such a rumour had indeed reached Valladolid ere I left that city," replied Joan. "And the Christian damsel—"

"Is none other than Isabella Rosas," observed Abdu-rahman, with a smile.

"Oh! then your Majesty may rest assured that a champion shall

appear in her behalf!" exclaimed Joan, her thoughts instantaneously settling upon the noble-hearted Gonzalez Andujar.

"Be it so," said the king, easily penetrating the idea which had suddenly sprung up in Joan's brain. "And were the outlaw of the Sierras to refuse to break a lance in the cause of Isabella Rosas," he continued, with a smile of still more friendly blandness, "you yourself would not hesitate to buckle on your armour and appear in the lists. For now that I recall my recollections, Joan is the name of the heroine who fought so valiantly beneath the walls of Valladolid: and the share which you took, brave Christian lady, in those two conflicts which preceded the fall of the city, is the only incident which you are now omitted from your otherwise minutely told narrative."

Joan blushed and cast down her eyes: she blushed, with the true bashfulness of woman, to be even reminded that she was a heroine.

"But I have omitted the explanations which I promised, and which so intimately regard yourself," resumed the King. "I was about to tell you that, from certain statements made to me by Isabella Rosas, I became aware of the fact that Algenora Tudela's place had been taken in the procession by a lady who possessed a peculiar ring which she was anxious to display before my eyes. I had already been informed that this lady was carried off by banditti; the principal matron acquainted me with that circumstance—and there was every reason to believe that Kara Ali was the author of the outrage. In consequence, therefore, of the intelligence gleaned from Isabella Rosas, I despatched a secret messenger to the Black Captain, charging him to deliver up to me the

lady whom he had abducted from the procession. My messenger succeeded in finding Kara Ali;—but the lady was no longer in his power. Thereupon my messenger assured him that unless he instituted a successful search after her, he need expect no forbearance nor mercy at my hands. Terrified at the threat, he promised to obey. My messenger commanded him, in case he should succeed, to bring the lady direct to Cordova, and to escort her hither himself so as to make sure that she reached her destination. To aid him in the full and complete carrying out of this enterprise, and so prevent any hindrance or impediment, the password for the present month was duly made known by my messenger to Kara Ali; and instructions were moreover given to all the slaves belonging to my palace, to the effect that any lady whom Kara Ali might conduct hither, should be immediately led into my presence. You therefore perceive, lady, that this last apparent outrage which you have experienced at the hands of the Black Captain, originated in the instructions which I had transmitted to him. But I am prepared to make you all possible amends for that rude treatment; and it is likewise my purpose to reward you for the readiness with which you undertook the commission entrusted to you by the old man of Calatrava Castle. On all these matters, however, I shall reflect on a more fitting occasion. For the rest of this night you will do well to share the chamber of your young friend Isabella Rosas; and early in the morning I will cause inquiries to be made whether General Andujar and his companions have as yet reached Cordova."

Having thus spoken, the king

clapped his hands—and one of the black slaves glided into the hall from the door behind the throne.

"Conduct this lady to the mother of the harem," said his majesty; "with my commands to the effect that she be lodged with the Christain damsel, Isabella Rosas. Let her receive the kindest treatment and the highest consideration; and let no gossipping tongue venture to prate or prattle concerning her presence in the palace—for it is as a sister that I regard her!"

The slave bowed till his forehead touched the steps of the throne; and our heroine expressed her gratitude to the king for the generous courtesy which he observed towards her. She then followed the slave from the hall, and after traversing several spacious apartments and threading numerous corridors, they reached the division of the palace already described as the harem.

The slave aroused the matronly Ayesha from her slumbers—for it was now midnight: but when she heard the instructions sent from Abdu-rahman, she kissed Joan upon either cheek with the most marked respect. Refreshments were offered: but our heroine refused them—for she was sinking with weariness: and the mother of the harem accordingly conducted her to the elegantly-furnished chamber occupied by Isabella Rosas.

This being the eve of the tournament, the young maiden was unable to sleep. She had not as yet closed her eyes once, although two hours had elapsed since she retired to rest: for she was tortured by conflicting hopes and fears relative to her own fate.

A lamp diffused its mellow lustre through the chamber; and she was reclining in her voluptuous couch which scarcely seemed a bed

of down to the anxious girl, in her soul's profound restlessness.

When the door was slowly opened and our heroine was ushered in by the mother of the harem, Isabella could scarcely believe her eyes.

She started up—gazed—pressed her hand to her brow in order to collect her thoughts—then gazed again—and still fancied that she must be labouring under the influence of a vision.

The matronly Ayesha retired—and our heroine remained alone with Isabella.

Then, when the latter was clasped in the arms of the warm-hearted Joan, she no longer believed that she was deluded by a dream: but she welcomed her visitor with all ardour of one who has longed for the solace of a companion, and who at length obtains the object of her desire.

Nor was Joan slow in giving Isabella the assurance that a warrior would be forthcoming at the proper time to do battle on her behalf; and when she continued to observe that this champion would probably be the mighty Gonzalez Andujar, Isabella clasped her hands in an ecstasy of gratitude and joy—exclaiming while tears ran down her cheeks, "Then I am saved! I am saved!"

CHAPTER L

THE KING AND THE BANDIT

WE must now return to the magnificent hall where we left King Abdu-rahman.

Soon after Joan Gilbertus had withdrawn under the guidance of the black slave, the monarch clapped his hands a second time—another sable attendant made his appearance—and the king ordered Kara Ali to be brought into his presence. This command was

immediately obeyed, and in a few moments the bandit-chief was kneeling at the feet of his sovereign.

"Dost thou not tremble to find thyself here, detestable robber?" demanded the king, in a stern tone.

"I should tremble, most powerful monarch," replied the Black Captain, lifting up his head, but still remaining on his knees, "had I not your majesty's royal word, vouchsafed to me through your majesty's messenger, to the effect that my personal safety should be guaranteed while visiting Cordova upon this special matter."

"But as thou settest the law at naught," exclaimed the king, scarcely able to repress a smile at the bandit's assurance, "how thinkest thou that I shall preserve faith with thee?"

"Your majesty is above the law, and would not therefore condescend to trample upon it," was Kara Ali's ready manner: "whereas I am under the law and feel its yoke somewhat irksome."

"Thou hast long ago flung off that yoke, robber that thou art!" exclaimed the king.

"And yet, in my wayward avocations," observed the Black Captain, "I have not lost sight of my duty and respect towards your majesty."

"By the prophet! he throws this in our teeth," cried Abdurahman stroking his beard—which was a sure sign of the royal displeasure."

"Allah forbid that I should be guilty of any impropriety towards so merciful a monarch!" exclaimed Kara Ali. "But if, in self-defence, I ventured to allude the fact that I have more than once had the honour and satisfaction of transmitting to your majesty's coffers the treasures dug up in some ruined tower or dilapidated monastery——"

"The bandit speaks truly!" interrupted the King. "Yes—you have somewhat atoned thus far for your manifold transgressions: but of late years your exploits have grown so desperate and your plunderings so extensive, that your name is a terror to my subjects throughout the country. Mark well, Kara Ali, what I am about to say—so that you may die peaceably and be buried with your head on your shoulders, when your lease of life runs out."

"I can assure your majesty that nothing would grieve me more than the prospect of being buried without a head," returned Kara Ali.

"Did I fancy that you were jesting in an unseemly manner, vile robber," said the king, "I would order the slave master to inflict a thousand blows of the bastinado upon the soles of your feet. Rise, Kara Ali—and listen to the words of your sovereign."

The Black Captain made another salaam, and then rose from his knees, assuming the most grave and solemn look he could possibly put on."

"When first I gave you some secret encouragement to collect a band of troopers," continued Abdurahman, "It was with understanding that you should establish yourself of the northern frontiers of the kingdom, so as to harass the Christians of Asturias. But you have gradually, insidiously, and unlawfully turned against your fellow-countrymen those arms which I suffered you to take up in the expectation that they were to be used only against the infidel dogs of Spaniards. What have you to say in answer to all this?"

"Most powerful monarch," returned the Black Captain, "I have much to urge in self-defence and proper extenuation. The license

which your majesty granted me, in the origin, to form a free band, as the term is, upon the frontier, naturally exposed me to much temptation in divers ways. The habit of plundering a Christian gradually rendered me so indifferent as to the creed or nation of the person plundered, that when Christian travellers were lacking, I was fain to levy contributions upon Moors. Then the excitement of despoiling a Christian Church or two in Asturias, prompted me to practise the same towards some poor mosque in your majesty's dominions."

"Some poor mosque!" echoed the king, angrily. "You have plundered a dozen rich ones in your time. But treat not the matter with levity, Kara Ali. You are now safe and secure in the possession of my royal guarantee: you are bold in the conviction that you will depart hence uninjured as you came. Take heed, however, for the future. Report saith that your band is large—that its sections are posted in various parts—that you have many stations and strongholds—and that your steeds are numerous almost beyond counting. My vizier has more than once threatened to break up this formidable organization which you have so extensively ramified: but, considering that you have done the State some service by your predatory incursions into Asturias, and by the treasures which you have from time to time poured into our coffers, I have hitherto stayed his hand. There is, however, a limit to all human patience; and that limit has now occurred to mine. Presuming upon my forbearance, you carried your audacity to such an extent, as to assail the procession of Asturian Virgins."

"But your Majesty has granted

me a free pardon in that respect," said Kara Ali, "on condition that I brought the lady so carried off into your royal presence. I have done so."

"Nor shall I forfeit my word," exclaimed the king: "but I thus choose to refer to the past, in order to give you salutary warning for the future. Are you resolved to take that warning?"

"Henceforth your majesty shall hear of no complaints concerning me," responded the Black Captain: "on the contrary, your royal treasury shall be benefitted by my researches amongst the old ruins which abound in the country."

"And those researches may also extend as much as you choose to the infidels' dwellings on the frontiers," added the monarch, with a significant look. "And now hear me, Kara Ali—for I am about to reveal unto your ears certain intelligence which I have not even yet communicated to the grand-vizier. It is my intention to declare war against Asturias; and immediately after the tournament my armies shall be set in motion."

"These are glorious tidings, great king!" ejaculated Kara Ali. "A thousand scimitars will flash forth at my command. Grant, then, the Black Captain's troop shall serve as a scouring party to prepare the way for your majesty's hosts."

"I accept this proof of your allegiance, Kara Ali," said the king; "and on condition that you fulfil your proposal, will I draw a veil over the past."

"Will your majesty deign to inform your slave how he may testify his devotion?" asked the Black Captain: "and inasmuch as my men are unrivalled at a foray and are especially active in a district that promises some reward for their exertions, I beseech your majesty

to command me to invade the richest and most populous provinces of Asturias."

"So far from being enabled, in the first instance, to gratify you and your brave men in this respect," answered the king, "I am about to engage you in a special service the scene of which lies in the wildest and most deserted portions of the Asturian realm. But if you will thereby lack immediate opportunities of plunder, you shall be indemnified as soon afterwards as possible."

"With this gracious promise I must content myself," observed Kara Ali. "And now, what is the service wherein your majesty proposes to engage me?"

"The tournament, and other entertainments will last three days," continued Abdu-rahman; "and on the third evening my heralds will make proclamation of war against Asturias. Within the shortest possible delay, therefore, after such proclamation, must you repair with your gallant band to the Sierra de Oca and take possession of the Castle of Calatrava. This exploit will be easy of accomplishment, inasmuch as it is indifferently guarded, even if there be within its precincts any garrison capable of firing a single arrow in its defence. But should you encounter any resistance, you will lay close siege to the fortress—invest it on every side—and thus maintain the beleaguering until the march of my royal armies shall allow me to send a detachment to your aid."

"Upon my head be it to obey your majesty's pleasure," exclaimed Kara Ali. "But if I succeed in capturing the castle at once, and the cellars, butteries, and larders should prove well stored, your majesty need observe no particular haste in sending a reinforcement

thither. My brave fellows will not grow tired of their quarters."

"One word more relative to this enterprise which I am entrusting to thee, Kara Ali," said the king. "On making yourself master of Calatrava Castle, you will discover an old man in certain secret and well-protected chambers."

"And doubtless your majesty wishes me to hang him up as an example, on the highest gibbet ever erected at the fortress?" observed Kara Ali.

"Put not wards into my mouth, nor venture to interpret my ideas after thine own wrong-headed fashion," said Abdu-rahman, sternly. "So far from injuring a single hair of the old man's head, thou wilt treat him with all possible respect—kiss his hand—prostrate thyself before him—and assign him as a lodgment the richest apartments in the castle. Thou wilt also tell him that King Abdu-rahman has received his token, and will shortly arrive with great armies to do his behest. But until the moment that thou findest thyself in the presence of this venerable old man, thou wilt keep secret the instructions which I have given thee concerning him. Dost thou comprehend me, Kara Ali?—and wilt thou obey?"

"I comprehend—and will obey," answered the Black Captain. "Has your majesty any farther instructions to give your slave?"

"None. You may retire," was the response.

"Before I leave your majesty's august presence," said Kara Ali, again falling upon his knees, "grant me one boon—a boon which I crave most earnestly?"

"Speak!" exclaimed Abdu-rahman. "But beware lest thou askest aught which I may not grant consistently with my own honour and the love of justice."

"The boon I implore at your majesty's hands," said Kara Ali, "can be easily accorded. It is to the effect that I may not be compelled to leave your royal city of Cordova until after the tournament. A few of my brave men have accompanied me hither, and to-morrow, at sunrise, they shall depart for the special purpose of visiting all the strongholds and haunts of my band, so as to effect a general muster of the various divisions in one point. Ten days hence the entire troop of one thousand strong shall be assembled at the rallying-place near Buytrago, where I will join them;—and thence will I lead the gallant squadron into the passes of the Sierra de Oca. The boon that I crave will therefore involve no loss of valuable time."

"Be it, then, as thou sayest," observed the king, after a few moments' reflection. "Thy boon is granted—and thou hast my permission to remain at Cordova until after the tournament."

The Black Captain bowed his head down to the marble step, and then retired from the presence of the Moorish sovereign.

CHAPTER LI

ABDU-RAHMAN'S TREATMENT OF JOAN

WHEN Joan and Isabella Rosas awoke in the morning, they found the mother of the harem standing by their couch; and, after the most respectful salutations, Ayesha informed our heroine that, in pursuance of inquiries instituted by the king's command, it had been ascertained that General Andujar and his companions had arrived in the middle of the night at Cordova.

An intimation had been given to them to the effect that Joan was safe in the royal palace and would join them presently at the hostel where they were staying.

Our heroine was much delighted at the intelligence which she thus received from the mother of the harem; and at the same time she felt deeply grateful towards the Moorish sovereign on account of so much generous forethought and interest on her behalf.

Ayesha then proceeded to remind Isabella Rosas that she must apparel herself in a fitting manner to appear at the tournament; and the goodhearted woman expressed, with much sincerity, her earnest hope not only that a champion would appear in the maiden's cause, but that he would likewise prove successful in the encounter. Tears trickled down Isabella's cheeks, but a smile shone through those tears when she met the glance of encouragement and deep meaning which Joan threw upon her.

The mother of the harem now retired from the chamber, and in a few moments six beautiful Moorish slaves entered. Having assisted Joan and Isabella to put on some light apparel, they conducted them to the adjacent bath-rooms, and while the ceremony of ablution was performed in perfumed water, an unseen band played several soft and delightful airs.

Meantime, while Joan was still enjoying the luxury of the bath, the slaves exhibited before her eyes a large assortment of elegant costumes in the Christian style; and when she declared that she should prefer resuming her own plain apparel, they gently remonstrated against a decision which would lead the king to suppose that she rejected the attentions that were shown her by his express command. Feel-

ing, that she had no right to offend a monarch who was treating her with an honorable courtesy, Joan suffered her scruples to be overridden by the persuasion of the Moorish damsels; and she accordingly selected the plainest of the very handsome dresses submitted for her choice.

But scarcely had she thus fixed upon a garb, when the slaves exhibited several caskets of jewels, each casket being alone worth a monarch's ransom. Our heroine was again compelled to make her selection, and notwithstanding she chose the one that appeared to be of the least value, its possession nevertheless rendered her immensely rich in a moment.

On issuing from the bath, she had to submit to the ordeal of the toilette—a process which she would much rather have performed for herself.

The slaves combed out her long, luxuriant brown hair, applying to it a fragrant oil which enhanced its natural lustre.

They arranged it also in the manner most becoming the handsome countenance which it adorned, and they compelled Joan to survey in the mirror the results of their skill, little suspecting how small an amount of genuine female vanity entered into the composition of her mind.

They then proceeded to array her fine form in the garments which she had chosen; and they evidently felt delight in setting forth her beauty to its utmost advantage.

A dark velvet tunic, richly embroidered, now displayed her admirable proportions, revealing just enough of the shoulders and the bosom to show the natural fairness of her skin, and that the slight hue of brown upon the cheeks was the effect of exposure to the sun.

The long skirt, of silken texture and dark colour, well in such folds as to develop the sweeping length and fine symmetry of those limbs which that garment nevertheless concealed, and the feet were imprisoned in shoes of the finest morocco.

When thus arrayed, the jewels were distributed about her person. A tiara of diamonds shone upon her brow—a string of pearls, of a size and purity such as she had never seen before, circled her neck—bracelets were fastened upon her wrists—and a star of gleaming gems was attached to a loop of her dress on either shoulder.

Then, a velvet cap, with a plume of white feathers, fastened by a diamond clasp, and having a black veil of the richest lace pending to the side, was placed upon her head in such a manner as to cover the tiara without disturbing it.

Lastly, a cincture, or belt of crimson velvet, was tied loosely round her waist: and a massive gold chain attached thereto in the form of a loop, sustained a dagger the handle of which was coral set with precious stones.

The toilette being thus completed, Joan was conducted into an apartment where the table was spread with all kinds of delicacies. There she was immediately joined by Isabella Rosas, on whose personal appearance similar pains had evidently been bestowed, with the exception that the jewels which decorated her apparel were not so costly as those worn by our heroine.

The mother of the harem now made her appearance again; and after complimenting both Isabella and Joan upon their natural charms and the beauty of their toilettes, she seized an opportunity to whisper a few words in the ear of the latter.

"The king, when once pledged to a particular course," she said, "never retreats from his word. He has declared that Isabella must submit to the chance of a joust at the tournament, and he cannot alter his decision. Otherwise, he would at once restore her unconditionally to freedom, for your sake. But his Majesty has ordered that every care and attention should be lavished upon her toilette, so as to enhance her personal beauty to a degree that will ensure the appearance of a champion in the cause of one so eminently lovely."

Joan received these assurances as another proof of Abdu-rahman's generous courtesy and friendly feelings towards herself, and in all these manifold attentions she saw the complete fulfilment of the promises held out in the secret instructions given her by the old man of Calatrava Castle. But who could this old man be, that even from the living tomb in which he was confined he was enabled to exercise so potent an influence upon the mighty Abdu-rahman? This question, which Joan could not help putting to herself more than once, involved some mystery that at present defied all conjecture.

When Isabella and Joan had partaken of some refreshment,—delicious music playing the while in a neighbouring corridor,—they were conducted by the mother of the harem to one of the inner courtyards of the palace: and there they beheld two milkwhite palfreys splendidly caparisoned. Twelve African male slaves were in attendance; and six porters were standing a little apart, each laden with a large packet enveloped in a costly shawl.

Ayesha now observed that Isabella Rosas was to be consigned to Joan's care and remain with her during the three days of the

tournament,—the mother of the harem adding that his Majesty did not even require our heroine to pledge herself against her young friend's escape, the strictest reliance being placed in the honour and good faith of them both. Isabella was overjoyed to find that she was not to be separated from Joan; and the latter beheld in this proceeding another touching proof of Abdu-rahman's goodness towards her.

The two ladies now mounted the palfreys provided for them, the gates were thrown open—and an escort of the royal guards was found waiting outside to conduct them to their destination. The African slaves followed on foot—as did also the porters with their burthens.

The street into which the procession emerged was crowded with persons of both sexes and all nations, who were hurrying onward to the place where the tournament was to be held. But they all stopped to behold the brilliant spectacle that thus burst upon their view. And so intent was their gaze—so audible were the expressions of admiration which burst from their lips relative to the beauty of Joan and Isabella—that these two ladies covered their countenances with their veils.

Through the admiring crowd did they pass on, until they reached the principal hostelry at Cordova, where Gonzalez Andujar, Berthold, and their followers, had taken up their quarters. To be brief, in a few minutes our heroine was clasped in the arms of her lover; and when the first effusion of joy at this meeting had somewhat subsided, she presented her charming companion Isabella to Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold.

Explanations of all that had passed since the adventure at Roderick's Tower, could not im-

mediately be exchanged, because the six porters had introduced themselves into the apartment where the meeting took place.

Depositing their burthens upon the floor, they hastily unrolled the heavy bales, and revealed all kinds of costly articles to the eyes of the party. There were splendid garments — superb weapons—handsome jewellery—a magnificent suit of armour especially intended for Gonzalez Andujar—flasks of delicious perfume—wines and provisions of every sort.

But what chiefly amazed, and even bewildered Joan with the munificence of the gift, was that all the raiment which had been exhibited to her and all the caskets of jewels from which she had selected the least valuable one, were now comprised amongst the presents forwarded by the king for her companions and herself.

The porters, having thus acquitted themselves of their mission, retired from the room—leaving Gonzalez Andujar, Berthold, Joan and Isabella, at liberty to converse upon the various matters that were interesting to each or all.

CHAPTER LII

THE TOURNAMENT

THE lists for the tournament were erected in a vast open space in the neighbourhood of the Moorish palace.

At one end an enormous platform was raised, covered with the richest carpets, and surmounted with a canopy of purple velvet fringed with gold. On this platform a throne was placed, and all along the back were several galleries, rising amphitheatrically, and having lattice-work in front of each. These were for the accom-

modation of the ladies of the king's harem.

On either side of the throne were lower seats, for the use of the grand vizier, the councillors, the chief judges, and other dignitaries of the state. A numerous body of black African slaves formed a circle about the entire stand ; and many of them carried jars of perfume and burning pastilles to render the air fragrant. High above the canopy floated the green standard—that emblem of the Mussulman faith under the auspices of which the Prophet Mohammed propagated his religion with the sword. *It is a white
dignified
by the
kings*

A strong palisade enclosed the space in which the tilting was to be held. There were four gates leading into the arena ; and at each entrance two heralds were stationed, to inquire the names of all champions coming to take part in the warlike entertainment. On a small platform near the royal stand a number of musicians were posted, while on another platform were several reserved seats, the object of which did not immediately appear to be understood by the crowds which had been gathering from an early hour.

We must add that all around the lists, save where the stands or platforms already mentioned were erected, rows of seats were arranged as an amphitheatre ; and as these stood a little back from the palisade itself, the interval between was allotted for the myriads who could not afford to pay for seats.

In fact, the accommodations were as judicious as they were extensive; and as the weather was resplendently beautiful, with a gentle breeze blowing from the adjacent acclivities of the Sierra Morena, the entertainments commenced under the most favourable auspices.

Shortly before eleven o'clock the

champions began to arrive, the music on one of the smaller platforms playing appropriate airs of martial welcome. As each champion entered the lists, arrayed in complete armour, with his visor closed, and attended by his squires, he gave his name to the heralds, who entered it upon their tablets to be proclaimed in due course.

The Christian warriors were chiefly distinguished by their massive armour, and especially by their cross-handled swords and the devices on their shields. The Moorish champions were generally notable by their lighter and more elegant steel panoply, and particularly by their scimitars, as well as by the crescent upon their bucklers and helmets. Moreover, the Christian warriors were all marshalled at one extremity of the lists, and the Moorish aspirants on the other. There were about fifty on either side, and amongst them were some of the most renowned chieftains in Europe.

At the same time that the champions were thus arriving, Isabella Rosas, Joan, and Berthold made their appearance, and were conducted by some of the king's own slaves, and with every mark of respect, to the platform containing the reserved seats already alluded to.

The two ladies were apparelled in the elegant manner described in the preceding chapter; and their great personal attractions, as well as the richness of their costume, excited general admiration on the part of all who were near enough to observe them with facility.

Berthold had put on one of the splendid dresses sent by Abdurahman; and his handsome though somewhat delicate appearance did not fail to attract the notice of the fair sex in the immediate vicinage

of the reserved seats. Kiamil and Malagamba were in attendance upon our heroine; and the richness of their apparel, setting off their fine African countenances and symmetrical forms to the best advantage, completed the picturesque aspect of the interesting group.

Several Christian and Moorish nobles were also accommodated with places on the same platform; and thus, before the entertainments began, the reserved seats were fully occupied.

Precisely at eleven o'clock a flourish of trumpets and clarions announced the presence of King Abdurahman, attended by his ministers and great officers of state.

He took his seat upon the throne; and then a dead silence ensued—that profound stillness being the Moslem manner of paying respect to the monarch. Immediately after his arrival, a long train of beauties, closely veiled, passed from the adjacent palace-gardens to the latticed galleries erected behind the royal platform; and as soon as it was known that the ladies of the king's harem had thus taken their places, the senior herald made proclamation that the tournament was about to commence.

In the first instance, six warriors rode forth from the Christian rank in one side of the lists, to joust with the same number of Moorish champions from the martial array on the other side.

These were chosen on both sides according to the order in which they had arrived within the enclosure, and their names, titles, and honours were duly published by the heralds.

As each separate proclamation was thus made, the name so announced was received with plaudits on the part of the assembled

multitudes, and by the waving of the ladies' gloves or kerchiefs.

When the list was concluded, the signal was given for the on-slaught.

At the first collision of the career-ing knights the shock was deafening, and every beholder held his breath in mute suspense. Three of the Christian warriors rolled upon the ground—while not one of the six Moorish champions was unhorsed. Now three of the latter retired from the contest, so that the second tilt might be equal; and now the trio of Christians who had maintained their seats, spurred their steeds along once more to encounter the three opposing Moslems. The fortune of the contest decided in favour of the latter, the trio of Christians being all unhorsed by the Mussulman lances.

The six Christians retired from the scene of their defeat—while the six Moors rode round the lists to receive the plaudits of the enthu-siastic multitude. On arriving in presence of the king, they bent their plumed heads to their saddle-bows; and Abdu-rahman threw them each a massive gold chain, of enormous value, which they hung round their necks over their steel corselets.

They then passed on—and, bowing gracefully in recognition of the applause lavished upon them, rode out of the lists.

The senior herald now made proclamation that there would be a single tilt between a Christian and a Moorish knight, and the names announced were welcomed with deafening acclaim.

The joust took place. Three times did the champions meet in thundering shock—and three times were their spears shivered against each other's bucklers. They were evidently well matched—and the

excitement created by so brilliant a passage-at-arms, was immense.

But at the fourth encounter the Christian was thrown heavily from his horse, and was borne senseless and bleeding from the lists.

Thus again did the Moorish chi-valry achieve a grand triumph, and the victor was munificently rewarded by King Abdu-rahman.

The third exhibition was one of a still more grand and interesting nature than those which had previously taken place. It was a combat between twenty-four Christians and æ-like number of Moors; and the proclamation made by the heralds was to the effect that after the first encounter, the champions were to leap from their horses and pursue the contest on foot.

The interest now excited was enhanced into a perfect delirium by the rumour that twenty-four of the most charming virgins recently arrived from Asturias, were to be the reward of the victors.

The twenty-four champions were drawn up on either side—their lances in the rest—their steeds champing the bit and pawing the ground with the characteristic impatience of the war-horse.

The clarions sounded. Away, away sprang the mettled chargers, bearing their steel-clad riders as if mere feathers were upon their backs, and in a few moments the very earth appeared to reel beneath the thundering shock.

A cloud of dust enveloped the combatants. As it cleared away before the freshening breeze that swept at the time from the Sierra Morena, the champions were seen fighting desperately on foot. They had dismounted from their horses, which the squires were now leading away from the immediate scene of the conflict—and the din of swords and scimitars striking upon helm

and breast-plate, hauberk and shield, denoted the fury of the fray. For a time the Christians appeared to have the advantage in this *melee*; but they presently became wearied—the superior agility and lightness of the Moors then prevailed—and at the expiration of an hour the Crescent achieved its third triumph over the Cross that day.

The plaudits having subsided, the king gave assurance that the promised reward should not fail to greet the victors; and while the Moorish portion of the spectators were worked up to a frenzy of enthusiasm at the brilliant victories obtained by their champions, the Christian beholders were for the most part plunged into the silence and sullenness of extreme mortification.

Even Isabella Rosas began to be mournfully depressed with a superstitious fear that the Moslem star was in the ascendant and that there was a spell upon the energies of the Christian chivalry this day; but Joan and Berthold reassured her by the declaration of their sanguine hope that there was at least one champion of the Cross who would yet retrieve the honour of that side to which he belonged.

And now indeed the anxious moment came—a moment so fraught with acute suspense for Isabella Rosas!

It was therefore with pallid cheek, quivering lips, and palpitating bosom, that she heard the senior herald make proclamation concerning herself. The announcement was to the effect that the fate of the lovely, the virtuous, and the accomplished Christian damsel who appeared in front of the stand with the reserved seats, was now to be decided in the next encounter.

Every look was for the instant turned upon Isabella Rosas, who

dared not draw the veil over her countenance for fear of the displeasure of the king, it having been his strict command that her beauty should inspire the heart and nerve the arms of the champion who might appear to do battle in her cause.

Scarcely was the proclamation made, when forth from the Christian ranks rode a warrior arrayed in a superb panoply and mounted upon a colossal steed.

High above his towering form waved the crimson plumes of his helmet, through the bars of which his eyes seemed to flash like lightning. And the king knew full well who this warrior must be—for he recognised the armour which he himself had sent that morning as a testimony of admiration and regard for so renowned a chief.

At the same time, from the Moorish ranks, did the royal champion advance towards the centre of the lists. He was clad in a suit of burnished armour, which shone like gold in the resplendent sunlight; and the plumes that waved above his helmet, as well as the scarf that hung over his shoulders and the pennon on his quivering lance, were of bright yellow. The trappings of his coalblack steed were of the same hue; and thus the whole appearance of this warrior was resplendent and dazzling in the extreme. His form was tall and more powerfully proportioned than the Moorish figure in general, while the evident firmness of his seat, the facility with which he managed his charger, and the ease displayed in brandishing his long lance, denoted an amount of skill and strength that rendered him no insignificant opponent.

The heart of Isabella Rosas had bounded with hope when she beheld her own champion ride for-

ward on the one hand ; but that heart sank again to the lowest profundity of her bosom, like a fluttering bird to the bottom of its cage, as she marked the formidable appearance of the Moslem foe.

" In the name of the prophet ! " cried the senior herald, his sonorous voice reaching to the most distant corner of the immense arena, " I do hereby declare and make known to all present, that the combat now about to take place is not a mere pleasant tilting and friendly breaking of lances, but a mortal strife between two good and gallant knights. This conflict is undertaken to decide the destiny of the fair Christian damsel whose seat is yonder. Should the royal champion prove victorious, she will forthwith enter the harem of the high and mighty King Abdu-rahman, the greatest of potentates. But if, on the other hand, her own champion shall bear away the palm of conquest, he will be entitled to dispose of the damsel according to his own good will and pleasure."

The herald paused for a few minutes, during which all eyes wandered from the two champions in the lists to the pale and trembling Isabella, and thence back again to the heroes who were to do battle to decide her fate.

" In the name of the prophet ! " again spoke the herald in his loudest tone : " I do hereby declare and make known to all present, that the good and trusty knight, Don Gonzalez Andujar, a chief of Asturian notability, doth come forward on the side of Christendom as a champion in the cause of the lovely damsel, the Senora Isabella Rosas ! "

The name of the renowned victor of Valladolid was received, alike by Moor and Christian, with an outburst of applause so tremendous

that the very heavens seemed shaken. Again and again broke forth the deafening shouts and enthusiastic cries,—rolling upon the ear like waves of mighty sound, and awaking every echo to the most distant corner of the Moslem capital.

" In the name of the prophet ! " spoke the herald again, when silence was restored : " I do hereby declare and make known that his Majesty, the high and mighty Abdu-rahman, hath appointed his well-beloved Hussein ben Zayad to do battle as his royal champion : and Hussein ben Zayad now appears accordingly."

While the cheers which welcomed the name of the Moorish warrior were yet reverberating through the air, the clarions sounded to the charge.

In full career met Gonzalez Andujar and Hussein ben Zayad—and, even as the leaf is tossed upon the wing of the hurricane, was the latter in a moment borne from his steed by the Christian hero's lance and hurled to a distance upon the ground.

The exploit was performed with a promptitude and yet with an apparent ease that took all the spectators by surprise ;—and while the notes of the clarions that sounded the charge were still ringing in the air, the conflict was over—the work was done—and Isabella sank fainting from excessive joy into the arms of Joan.

Then, as the myriads of voices were upraised in thundering shouts of applause, the young maiden was borne away from the scene by Kiamil and Malagamba—Berthold and Joan also accompanying her.

Stunned with the severe fall which he had sustained, and with the blood streaming from his mouth through the bars of his helmet, Hussein ben Zayad was raised

from the ground and carried into a tent at the rear of the lists, where medical aid was at hand. The herald then made proclamation to the effect that General Gonzalez Andujar was prepared to break a lance with any other champion from the Moorish ranks.

Thereupon forth from amidst the Moslem knights, did a tall and stalwart warrior advance, arrayed in a suit of iron armour far heavier than the strongest and most powerful of his fellow countrymen were wont to wear, and bestriding a charger whose strength and weight were unsurpassed by any steed within the lists.

"In the name of the prophet!" cried the herald: "I do hereby declare and make known that the challenge of the illustrious knight, General Gonzalez Andujar, is accepted by a certain Kara Ali, commonly called the Black Captain, who hath leave and license from his Majesty to appear in arms upon the present occasion."

The announcement of the well-known name of the terrible bandit-chief produced an immense excitement throughout the densely assembled masses; and although many individuals, Christians as well as Moors, were amazed and even indignant that a cruel and remorseless brigand should be allowed thus to take part in the war-like entertainments, the feeling found no expression in words, nor even in murmurs, inasmuch as Abdurahman himself was represented as authorising the proceeding.

It was likewise from motives of respect towards the monarch who had behaved so handsomely to himself and his friends, that Gonzalez Andujar was induced to break a lance with such a man as Kara Ali: nor perhaps was he altogether dis-

pleased at this opportunity of chastising the treacherous bandit for the affair at Don Roderick's Tower.

The trumpets sounded to the charge, Kara Ali dashed his spurs into the sides of his colossal steed, which bore him along with a velocity and a power that seemed irresistible—while Gonzalez Andujar scarcely took the trouble to impel his own war-horse into a moderate canter.

Thousands and thousands of those who thus marked the easy indifference or else downright scorn with which the Christian hero regarded his opponent, were suddenly struck with the thought that this was an overweening confidence on the part of the former, and that it would indubitably give the advantage to the latter.

But in a few moments far otherwise was the result.

For the point of Kara Ali's spear glanced innocuously from the surface of the shield raised to meet it—while the lance so firmly held and so precisely directed by Gonzalez Andujar penetrated through the buckler of the Black Captain, struck against the vizor of his helmet, and bore him backward from his horse.

But, though the fall which he thus experienced was violent and severe, Kara Ali instantaneously sprang to his feet, and drawing his huge scimitar, he defied Gonzalez Andujar to continue the combat on equal terms. Leaping from his horse, the outlaw of the Sierras drew his sword, and the next moment the cross-handled weapon of the Christian clashed against the gleaming sabre of the Moor.

"Dog of an infidel!" cried the latter, ferociously; "thy days are numbered!"—and he dealt a terri-

fic blow at the plumed head-piece of Gonzalez Andujar.

"The Angel of Death has armed not thine hand with the weapon that is to drink my blood," responded the outlaw of the Sierras, as he struck aside the descending scimitar.

"Thou art deceived in thine hope, proud Christian!" exclaimed the Black Captain, attempting a similar stroke with admirable dexterity, and throwing into it all the energies of his enormous physical power.

"Receive thy complete humiliation now!" returned Gonzalez Andujar. And even while he was yet speaking, the scimitar of Kara Ali, dashed from its master's hand, was whirling and singing through the air.

Then, with the savage growl as well as with the ferocious bound of a maddened tiger, did the Black Captain spring towards his conqueror: but Gonzalez Andujar, dropping his sword, seized his Moorish opponent round the waist—lifted him up in his herculean arms—and hurled him, like a thing of no weight, to a considerable distance.

The Black Captain lay stunned upon the ground and myriads of voices rent the sky with the tribute of admiration which their enthusiasm thus paid to the matchless chivalry of Gonzalez Andujar. Then, while the conquered bandit was borne from the lists, the hero remounted his steed and bade the herald proclaim defiance on his part against any or all the Moorish warriors.

In a moment this challenge was accepted by half-a-dozen of the brave Moslems: but the herald accorded to the senior in rank the honour of first doing battle with the Christian champion.

We shall not however dwell upon

the details of the encounter that now took place, nor those which followed. Suffice it to say that the invincible prowess of Gonzalez Andujar rescued the Christian chivalry from the reverses and disgrace which it had experienced in the earlier part of the proceedings. Moslem after Moslem was defeated—the flower of Abdu-rahman's heroes succumbed, as dwarfs in the hands of giants, beneath the strong arm of the outlaw of the Sierras—and when the entertainments of the day closed at sunset, the victor was complimented by the king, as the bravest warrior that ever broke a lance in his presence."

He was then escorted from the lists by the amazed and admiring multitudes, Moorish as well as Christian; and with enthusiastic shouts did they follow him whom they thus appeared to regard as a demigod, until he reached the hostel whither the tidings of his wonderful exploits had preceded him.

And now what warm and eloquent blushes suffused the cheeks of the lovely Isabella Rosas, as she flung herself at the feet of Gonzalez Andujar and endeavoured to shape in words the emotions of gratitude that filled her heart towards her deliverer.

Berthold and Joan, Kiamil and Malagamba, stood gazing with moistened eyes upon the touching scene, and when the Asturian hero bent down and touched the pure forehead of the maiden with his lips ere he raised her from her knees, Joan threw a significant glance at Berthold, as much as to say,

"Isabella will become the bride of the great and glorious Gonzalez Andujar."

The second and third days of the tournament well sustained the excitement which the first had produced throughout the city of Cor-

dova, and the Asturian hero bore away the laurels of every encounter in which he was engaged.

But in the evenings of the third and last day, when the entertainments were brought to a close, a universal feeling of surprise was created by an announcement loudly and pompously made by the senior herald.

This was to the effect that "the high and mighty potentate, King Abdu-rahman the Second, declared and proclaimed war against the King of Asturias, for certain reasons and considerations which his Moorish Majesty did not then deem fitting to be made public." But the herald went on to announce that "all Asturians then travelling or sojourning in the Moorish dominions, should receive full license and ample leisure to return into their own country; while those Spanish Christians who were settled and established at Madrid or elsewhere, might, by virtue of such domiciliation, continue to abide in the Moorish territory, under the protection of the laws heretofore."

This proclamation excited general amazement; and the Christians who had arrived at Cordova from all parts of Europe to behold the martial entertainments, now hurried their preparations to return homeward.

On the morning after the conclusion of the tournament, a party of African slaves from the royal palace entered the hostel where Gonzalez Andujar, his friends, and his followers, were also preparing for immediate departure; and these sable emissaries announced themselves as the bearers of presents from King Abdu-rahman.

His Majesty had likewise sent an autograph letter to Gonzalez Andujar, complimenting him upon

his valorous exploits at the tournament, and observing that inasmuch as it was now probable they might shortly meet in the battlefield, his Majesty hoped they would prove generous enemies towards each other.

The presents were chiefly intended for Joan and Isabella Rosas, but they were several articles of value especially addressed to Gonzalez Andujar and Berthold.

A letter expressive of the united gratitude of the recipients was drawn up and despatched to the generous Abdu-rahman; and thus, laden with proofs of the Moorish monarch's kind feeling and regal munificence, did our travellers take their departnre from the City of Cordova.

But in what manner had her interview with the king and the accomplishment of the mission entrusted to her by the patriarch of Calatrava Castle,—in what manner the reader will ask, had all this advanced the ambitious views or lofty aspirations for Jean?

She knew not—she could not comprehend: and it was with a feeling bordering upon disappointment that she thus bade farewell to the city of Cordova, with its superb mansions, its mighty domes, and its countless minarets.

We may now observe that King Abdu-rahman kept his promise towards the Astrolger Alasnam, and released him from captivity. But the reader of the celestial signs did not remain at Cordova many hours after his liberation.

Taking with him all the wealth he had accumulated during his long residence at the Moorish Court, he departed for France, where he established himself under another name at Paris, and renouncing his empirical profession,

lived in splendour on the fruits of his past imposture.

CHAPTER LIII

THE SECOND VISIT TO CALA- TRAVA CASTLE

TEN days had elapsed since the tournament at Cordova; and it was about nine o'clock in the evening that four persons on horseback were wending their way up the wild acclivity upon the summit of which stood the castle of Calatrava.

Two of the travellers rode a short distance in advance.

These were Berthold and Joan, while the two following in the rear were the faithful Kiamil and Malgamba, who had altogether attached themselves to the persons and become sharers in the fortunes of our heroine and her lover.

The declaration of war on the part of Abdu-rahman against the Asturians, had rendered it necessary for Gonzalez Andujar to return to his head-quarters with all possible speed—the journey from Cordova back into the Christian territory, had therefore been promptly executed. But at Buytrago, Joan and Berthold, accompanied by the two Africans, had separated from the outlaw's party. Important business of a peculiar nature was alleged as the motive for this proceeding, but Joan, with Berthold's concurrence, was anxious to obtain another interview with the old man at Calatrava Castle.

Gonzalez Andujar had besought his friends to accept of the escort of a portion of his followers; but the proposal was declined for two reasons. In the first place the springs and sources of past dangers seemed to exist no longer, and in the second place Joan and Berthold

felt pretty well assured that if they appeared at Calatrava Castle with a numerous escort, the warder would refuse them admittance. They therefore resolved to journey only in the companionship of the Africans, whom no persuasion would have induced to separate from them.

But as they promised—and indeed, hoped and expected—that this parting from Gonzalez Andujar and Isabella Rosas would be only temporary and brief, they requested the chieftain to take charge of all the rich presents and costly gifts which they had received from King Abdu-rahman: and therefore the sumpter-horses which were laden with those testimonials of Moorish munificence, accompanied Gonzalez Andujar's party towards Valladolid.

But ere we resume the thread of our narrative, the reader will be anxious to learn how it was that Isabella Rosas separated from her friend Joan.

And yet, dull and opaque must be the comprehension of the reader who cannot picture to himself how the heart of the lovely Spanish maiden had learned to cherish the image of her deliverer, and how the first sentiment of mingled gratitude for his generosity and admiration of his prowess, had soon deepened into a softer and more tender feeling.

Nor is it less easy to imagine how the soul of the mighty hero, inured though it was to the storms of life rather than to its sun-lit scenes, should have been touched by the bashful charms and modest beauty of the damsel whom his prowess had rescued from a Moorish harem. Yes, though their acquaintance had existed but for a few days, yet during this interval they had ample opportunity to understand and appreciate each other's merits. It was therefore to become the hero's

bride that Isabella Rosas, attended by a Christian handmaid whose services she had engaged on quitting Cordova, thus accompanied him to Valladolid.

We said, then, that Joan and Berthold, attended by Kiamil and Malagamba, were advancing towards the gate of Calatrava Castle. The Africans, not being properly Moorish subjects, incurred no risk of becoming prisoners of war—it was sufficient that they were not of the Saracenic race, and that they belonged to the service of a Christian master and mistress, to ensure them a free and safe passage through the Asturian dominions. We should add that both Joan and Berthold, as well as their sable attendants, were appareled in plain raiment and wore none of the ornaments nor fine vestures presented to them by the munificence of the Moorish Sovereign.

As the party approached the gloomy-looking castle, which stood out in sombre relief amidst the quivering and uncertain moon-beams, Joan's quick eye caught a glimpse of a light shining from a loophole in the square tower that frowned above the entrance, and as she drew her lover's attention to that light, she said,

"But a few weeks have elapsed since the former occasion on which we beheld the lamp glimmering from yon aperture—and how many as well as varied have been the adventures through which we have passed!"

"Your remark, beloved Joan, is suggestive of grave and serious reflections," observed the Abbot of Fulda. "From this castle you issued forth with your soul animated by the loftiest hopes: and we are now returning thither to learn what new phrase your destiny is to take."

"And why not yours also, my Berthold?" asked Joan, tenderly: "since our fates and fortunes are indissolubly linked together?"

"They are—they are, dearest Joan!" responded her lover, suppressing the sigh that rose to his lips—a sigh produced by the reflection which swept across his brain at the instant, that his health had suffered alarmingly by the vicissitudes, the fatigues, and the excitement experienced during the last four months.

The little party now reached the gates of the castle, and Berthold pulled the thick iron wire that rang the bell suspended within.

At the expiration of about a minute, the small trap was opened—the light streamed forth—and then the aperture was darkened by the appearance of a man's countenance. But as the moon-beams fell upon that face, Joan and Berthold instantaneously recognised the warden Rodrigo, and on soliciting an asylum for the night they reminded him that they had once before received a similar favour at his hands.

No sooner was this fact recalled to his memory, together with the circumstances under which the hospitality of the castle had been vouchsafed at the time, than Rodrigo likewise recollected the liberal manner in which he was compensated on that occasion, and without another moment's demur, he opened the gates.

"Now, Josefa, where are you?" cried Rodrigo, as much pleasure and gratification beaming upon his countenance as could possibly irradiate such unprepossessing features. "Come down quickly, I say—here are guests to whom all attention is due. Now, Toro," he vociferated, summoning his boy: "use your limbs deftly and take

charge of the horses. Ah ! I remember that the last time you were here, senor and senora, the steeds were taken round to the stables outside the walls, because the Hundred Virgins were here, and I dared not place your horses amongst their palfreys. But now I may grant you and yours all possible hospitality, inasmuch as there is no tributary procession here at present. You shall have a more comfortable lodgment on this occasion, senor——”

“ We will not put you to any inconvenience, good Rodrigo,” interrupted Berthold. “ On the contrary, we were so well pleased with the chambers which you gave us when we were here last, that we beseech you to assign us to the same place again.”

“ Not for worlds would I treat you so unhandsomely,” cried Rodrigo. “ You shall have the best apartments in the whole building. The Duke is not likely to visit us to-night,” he added, jocularly ; “ and therefore you may as well occupy the state chambers. Many years have elapsed since his lordship was here last—and there is now less chance than ever of his returning to his domain. He knows full well that the entire district is devoted to the cause of Gonzalez Andujar——”

“ Ah ! are you, then, admirer of the victor of Valladolid ?” asked Berthold, exchanging a rapidly-significant look with Joan.

“ Every true Asturian is and ought to be,” responded the man, emphatically ; “ and I remember telling you, senor, on the last occasion of your visit that I am a true Asturian. I hate the Moors, and if your attendants there,” he added, glancing towards Kiamil and Malagamba, “ had been Saracens instead of Africans,—I should

not have allowed them to cross this threshold. Yes, I should though,” he immediately observed, a thought striking him : “ but it would only have been to retain them in secure custody as prisoners of war.”

“ Then you have heard that hostilities are proclaimed by the King of Cordova ?” said Berthold, interrogatively.

“ I learnt the joyous tidings this afternoon,” responded Rodrigo. “ Some travellers, returning at great speed from the tournament at Cordova, passed through the adjacent village in the morning : and when I repaired thither to purchase provisions, I heard the report.”

“ And you call them joyous tidings,” observed Joan.

“ Yes—because this declaration of war will give Gonzalez Andujar an opportunity of beating the Moors and delivering Spain from their accursed yoke. The travellers who brought the intelligence of Abdu-rahman’s proclamation, said that the outlaw performed such prodigies of valour at the tournament that Moors and Christians were alike astonished.”

“ Do you not observe, Rodrigo,” said Josefa, who had descended from the room above in obedience to her husband’s summons,—“ that you are keeping the senora and the senor standing in this cold lobby, while you are chattering away like an old woman. Toro has already conducted the horses to the stables—and I will hasten to get ready the best apartments for the accommodation of our guests.”

“ Do so, wife,” observed Rodrigo : “ and in the meantime they will honour our own poor room with their presence. Fortunately we have a cheerful fire blazing—for

the evening is chill. Deign to follow me, senor and senora."

Berthold was about to reiterate his assurance that the same lodgings which they had occupied on the former occasion, would be preferred now; but Joan threw upon him a glance to convey her fear that such a persistency on that subject might engender suspicions in the warden's mind.

The Abbot of Fulda accordingly took the tacit but expressive hint thus implied; and our travellers, of course including Kiamil and Malagamba, followed Rodrigo up the narrow stone staircase.

The man led them into a chamber which, though small, was comfortable in appearance; while not only was there a good fire blazing in the grate, but the condition of the shelves afforded a guarantee that there would be no lack of substantial provisions for the supper.

But scarcely were our travellers thus temporarily located in the warden's apartment, when the din of many horses was heard approaching the fortalice at a rapid rate, and ere Rodrigo had even time to hurry down the flight of stone steps, the bell was rung furiously. Berthold, Joan, and the two Africans, who remained up-stairs, listened attentively. But amidst the confusion of voices and the tramplings of steeds they could distinguish nothing that was said.

It was however apparent that a large party had just arrived at the castle, and as the bell had been rung in so authoritative a manner and the horsemen had instantaneously ridden into the building on the gates being opened, it was natural to suppose that the visitors could be none other than the Duke of Calatrava himself, with a numerous train of attendants.

All uncertainty on this point was however soon cleared up, for Toro presently made his appearance—and, addressing Berthold, said,

"Father has sent me to beg you to excuse his absence, senor: he will join you again as soon as possible—but the whole place is in confusion at this moment. My lord the duke has arrived—and what is more, the king is with him—"

"King Alphonso!" ejaculated Berthold and Joan, as if speaking in one breath..

"Yes, senor—yes, senora," replied the lad. "His majesty is here—with a number of ladies and a train of nobles and gentlemen—at least fifty or sixty of them altogether—and they are going to stay at the castle to-night, if not longer. It was lucky my mother had already lighted the fires in the state chambers, but father says that he shall not be able to grant you such good accommodation as he at first intended—and he fears he shall be compelled, after all, to assign you to the same lodgment which you had when you were here last. He told me in a hurried whisper to come and acquaint you with these particulars, as he is busy in showing my lord's lacqueys where to stable the horses. But he will come as soon as he can get away; and in the meantime I am to attend upon you."

"And the king is really here, Toro?" said Joan. "But numerous as the ladies and gentlemen may be as a party of visitors to the castle, they nevertheless constitute but a small retinue for the monarch of Asturias."

"Something wrong has occurred at Oviedo, senora," replied the lad; "and from a few observations I heard the lacqueys exchange

amongst themselves, I think the king has been compelled to fly."

At this moment Rodrigo made his appearance. He was greatly excited—but it was rather with a joy which he had been endeavouring to conceal as much as possible, than with grief or vexation. He speedily confirmed the intelligence which his son had just vaguely hinted at, and the details of his information may be summed up in a very few words.

It appeared that after the battle of Valladolid, the king fled precipitately towards his capital, where he found the utmost excitement prevailing, the news of his signal defeat having arrived there before him.

The priesthood, the nobles, and the middle classes were in consternation; the working classes, the serfs, and the slaves were in ecstasy; and the garrison was gloomy and sullen.

Alphonzo instantaneously commanded a general levy of troops, and ordered heavy taxes to be imposed for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the civil war. Soon afterwards the tidings reached Oviedo that with the exception of the execution of the archbishop, not a single act of severity had been perpetrated by Gonzalez Andujar at Valladolid. It likewise became known that the Marquis of Leon was one of his lieutenants, and several youthful scions of the aristocracy were induced, by a prescient idea how the civil war would end, to hasten to Valladolid and follow the example set by Aurelio. While Gonzalez Andujar was absent at Cordova, his army at Valladolid became enormously increased; and in the meantime the spirit of discontent had been gaining ground at Oviedo. The tradesmen of that capital shut up their shops in order to avoid the payment of the ruinous

taxes decreed by the king; the peasants of the surrounding districts hurried off to join the insurrectionary army in preference to enlisting in the royalist ranks; and the remnants of the force that had been vanquished at Valladolid, declared openly they would fight no more against a cause on which heaven itself appeared to smile.

Alphonzo had recourse to the most oppressive measures to enact the payment of contributions, and enforce the levies of troops. Matters were thus brought to a speedy crisis. An insurrection broke out at Oviedo—the garrison revolted—the populace took up arms—and Alphonzo was compelled to fly with the utmost precipitation.

Accompanied by his ministers and the principal nobles and gentlemen of his household, together with their wives, sisters, and daughters, the fugitive monarch sped to Burgos. But that city, having already declared in favour of Gonzalez Andujar, refused to open its gates to the royal cortege; and the only alternative remaining was to press on with all possible despatch for Calatrava Castle.

Such was the intelligence given by Rodrigo to Berthold and his companions, and the reader will not desire to be informed that it was received with the most enthusiastic joy.

The three great cities of Asturias were now in favour of Gonzalez Andujar; and when Abdurrahman's proclamation of war should become generally known throughout the kingdom, it was clear that the whole Spanish community would look to the hero of Valladolid as the only man calculated to resist the progress of Moorish invasion in the peninsula.

"It will be as well," said Rodrigo, when he had concluded his brief

but interesting narrative, "that my Lord Duke should remain in ignorance of the presence of any stranger-guests at the castle; and therefore you will not object to occupy the same lodgment where you were installed on the former occasion."

"I have already assured you, my good friend," replied Berthold, "that we shall cheerfully accept the accommodation you propose."

"Follow me, then," said Rodrigo: and taking up the lamp, together with a bundle of firewood, he led the way down the stone staircase—through the vestibule—across the court-yard—into the tower where the chambers alluded to were situated.

The flight of broken and dilapidated steps was ascended—the almost interminable stone corridor was threaded—and the party reached the little ante-chamber with the two doors opening into the bedrooms.

Berthold and Joan took possession of the one containing the secret means of communication with the vaulted chambers beneath, and the other sleeping apartment was allotted to the Africans.

A fire was speedily lighted in each, and Rodrigo, having quitted his guests for a short time, presently returned with a copious supply of provisions, and another lamp for the use of the Africans.

He then bade them all good night, promising to revisit their quarters early in the morning.

CHAPTER LIV

THE ROYAL PARTY

IN the meantime the individuals forming the royal party had sat down to the supper which was hastily served up in the state apartments of Calatrava Castle. Fortu-

nately they had been accompanied by mules laden with provisions—otherwise Rodrigo's larder could not possibly have supplied the requisite materials to furnish the banqueting-table.

The immense rooms which had always been kept in good order by the thrifty and industrious Josefa, were well lighted: and as the king's retainers had brought away a large quantity of the royal plate from the palace at Oviedo, the board exhibited a magnificent appearance, despite the hurried and necessarily imperfect preparations made for the repast.

There were, as Toro had stated, about sixty persons in all, of whom twenty were ladies. The king was a widower, but he had two sisters and one daughter—his only child—who had accompanied him in his flight.

This last mentioned princess was a beautiful girl of about fifteen; but having been brought up under the care of her two aunts, who were proud and narrow-minded to a degree, her disposition and demeanour had become assimilated to their own. The Lady Ildefonsa, who had acted as principal matron in charge of the last tribute of Virgins, and who had remained attached to the court since her return from Cordova, was likewise a member of the fugitive party. In addition to the personages already named or alluded to, there were the Grand Chancellor of the Kingdom, the chief Judge of Oviedo, the Commandant of the Royal Guards, two or three councillors of state, and various other officials, courtiers, and retainers.

Of the ladies, some few were young and beautiful. But upon the features of the most juvenile as well as of the oldest, a deep

melancholy sat—for they all perceived but too plainly for their own selfish interests, that the star of Alphonzo's fortunes was fast setting and would speedily be enveloped in the blackest night.

When the royal party fled from Oviedo, the news of Abdu-rahman's proclamation of war had not reached that capital. It was not until they arrived at the gates of Burgos that they learnt the intelligence which seemed to crown the king's misfortunes.

Then a bewilderment more cruel than aught they had yet experienced seized upon the unhappy monarch and his retainers, for they felt that they were surrounded by dangers in their own territory—and they dared not now take refuge in that of the Moors.

Such were the menacing circumstances and lowering auspices under which they had arrived at Calatrava Castle; and though the banquet was spread with all possible splendour, it was but as the mockery of an expiring royalty and a fading dynasty. The pomp of courtly forms and the ostentation of regal ceremony were thus persisted in unto the last—but they concealed not, much less lightened, the desolation that was brooding upon every heart. Thus is it ever with kings and courtiers—they are constantly striving to consolidate the substance of their power and splendour, and when that substance dissolves away they still tenaciously cling to the shadow.

The banquet being over, the king bade every one remain seated, observing with a melancholy sigh that in the present alarming condition of affairs it was necessary to hold an immediate council, at which the ladies might assist with their suggestions.

Alphonzo then of his own ac-

cord proposed to abdicate the throne in favour of his daughter Dolorosa, and to despatch messengers to Valladolid to communicate the circumstance to Gonzalez Andujar and beseech his assent to the arrangement, so that by means of his support the young Princess might be crowned Queen of Asturias.

But the grand chancellor urged, in opposition to this proceeding, that Gonzalez Andujar was doubtless an ambitious man, having an eye to the throne for himself; and the majority of the council, judging of the outlaw only through the medium of their own prejudices and selfishness, coincided with this opinion. The chief judge of Oviedo suggested that Alphonzo and his faithful retainers should take refuge in France and solicit the aid of King Louis the Debonnaire. This proposal was overruled by the arguments of the commandant of the guards, who represented that the French sovereign was himself so surrounded by difficulties and embarrassments of all kinds as to have neither men nor money to spare for the succour of a foreign potentate.

The Lady Ildefonsa then spoke, and suggested that a deputation should be sent with all possible speed to King Abdu-rahman, not only to ensure peace upon any terms, but likewise to invoke the Moorish monarch's aid in suppressing the rebellion and restoring tranquillity in Asturias. Her ladyship added that from what she had seen and heard of Abdu-rahman when very recently at Cordova, she had no doubt that the proposed embassy would carry the negotiations to a successful issue.

This counsel produced a sensible effect upon King Alphonzo and the others present. The monarch's

two sisters expressed themselves in accordance with Lady Ildefonsa's views ; several noblemen spoke in a similar strain ; and then all eyes were turned upon the Duke of Calatrava, who had not as yet volunteered an opinion on any of the mooted points.

" May it please your Majesty," said the old courtier, who had remained for some time buried in profound thought, " I am about to offer a suggestion which will perhaps surprise and startle all those who hear it, but which cannot fail to merit an approbation equally general. First and foremost, however, I must ask whether there be a single individual now present who has never heard the legend of Don Roderick's Tower ? "

" We have all heard it," was the response that emanated from every lip—and at the same time every gaze expressed a deeper interest and a more vivid curiosity to learn the suggestion which was thus so singularly prefaced.

" Since you are all acquainted with the Legend of Don Roderick's Tower, which stands in the neighbourhood of Toledo," continued the Duke of Calatrava, with solemn tone and serious manner, " I need only remind you that amongst the marvels which the last of the Gothic kings beheld in that tower, was an enchanted statue, gifted with the faculty of speech. That colossal image, on the memorable night of Don Roderick's visit to the tower, spoke words of counsel from its marble throat ; and had they been followed, it is probable—nay, indeed certain—that Count Juliano would never have invited the Moors into Spain. But the advice of the Enchanted Image was neglected : and thence arose all the evils which have since cursed our unhappy country. Now

tell me, Don Alphonzo," added the Duke of Calatrava, rising from his seat and addressing the Asturian king with a solemnity that produced an awe-inspiring effect upon every one present,—" tell me, Don Alphonzo, whether you would have disregarded the counsel of the image, had you been placed in the position of Don Roderick ? "

" Granting that the details of the legend are true," replied Alphonzo, " I should have assuredly obeyed the mandates of the Enchanted Statue."

" Those details are true, my liege — true to the letter !" said the Duke of Calatrava, in that same tone of solemnity which had already made so profound an impression upon his auditory. " And now, Don Alphonzo," he continued, " if that Enchanted Head were here—with in the walls of this castle,—and if its marble lips would open to breathe words of advice in your ear—say, Don Alphonzo, would you follow that advice, whatever it might be ? "

" I would !" was the monarch's emphatic answer ; and the sensation of awe deepened in the breast and on the features of every one present—for each and all felt as if the relations of some grand and portentous secret were about to take place.

" Then, Don Alphonzo," proceeded the Duke of Calatrava, his naturally pale countenance beaming with the inspiration that belongs to prophecy—" thou hast now an opportunity of consulting that same Enchanted Image—thou mayest now derive counsel from its lips in the moment of thy bitter need and consummate adversity : for the Marble head, which once vainly spoke to the Visigothic king in the tower near Toledo, is within the walls of Calatrava Castle."

Words are incompetent to describe the sensation produced by this intelligence. The king—the princesses—the ladies—the nobles—and the gentlemen all started from their seats and gazed in mingled astonishment and incredulity upon the peer who had made the announcement.

For few, if any of them, had ever regarded the legend of Don Roderick otherwise than as a fable founded upon popular superstition; and they were indeed startled at being seriously and solemnly assured that the details of the story were strictly authentic, and that an evidence of their truth existed within those very walls.

But there was nothing in the aspect nor manner of the Duke of Calatrava to warrant the belief that his senses were abandoning him or that his reason was affected; while, on the other hand, the subject was far too grave and existing circumstances much too menacing to be made food for joke, even if his humour were at any time a jocular one.

“Will your Majesty follow me?” he demanded, after a brief pause, during which the silence of death had prevailed in the apartment.

“I will,” returned King Alphonzo. “And in the words of Don Roderick, ‘Let those who will accompany me!’”

“All!” was the general cry.

“Come, then,” exclaimed the Duke of Calatrava: and, snatching up a candle, he led the way from the banqueting-room.

In the great hall outside, the lacqueys of the royal suite were in attendance: and they were commanded to follow in the procession.

CHAPTER LV

THE ARMOUR AND THE JEWELS

THE reader will remember that large, handsomely-furnished, though gloomily magnificent apartment in which the interview between the venerable patriarch and Algenora, and likewise that between the same mysterious individual and Joan, took place, as described in the opening chapter of our narrative. It will be recollected that at one extremity of this apartment there was a large screen, behind which Joan concealed herself at the time that Algenora was approaching down the long wainscoted gallery.

In the same apartment we shall now find Joan and Berthold seated, in company with the old man.

It was about eleven o’clock.

Before they had penetrated to these mysterious chambers they had secured the door of their own room above—and, having traversed the vaulted receptacle of the armour, the jewels, and the instruments of torture—thence passing through the place where the three skeletons were standing like death-sentinels in the recess—they had reached the large apartment, where they at once found themselves in the presence of the patriarch. Though much surprised at this visit, he nevertheless greeted them cordially, and when Joan informed him that she had accomplished his mission in all things, he bestowed upon her the most flattering eulogies.

He bade her recount to him in detail everything that had transpired since she and Berthold quitted Calatrava Castle. But she had not finished her narrative ere the sounds of footsteps were heard approaching along the wainscoted corridor. The old man started up

and flung an anxious look in that direction; then observing the Duke of Calatrava advancing with a light in his hand, at the head of a numerous train of personages male and female, he appeared singularly perplexed and trembled for a moment. But speedily recovering his presence of mind he said to Berthold and Joan,

"Hasten behind that screen—and stir not as you value your lives. If you are discovered, death will be your portion!"

They hastened to obey the injunctions so emphatically and at the same time alarmingly expressed; and scarcely were they ensconced in their hiding-place, when the Duke of Calatrava entered the apartment alone, the king and his suite all remaining half-way down the wainscoted gallery.

"Years have elapsed since last we met, Duke of Calatrava," said the old man, in a somewhat haughty and imperious tone. "What wouldest thou with me?"

"I am conducting hither his Majesty King Alphonzo," returned the duke, in a low voice. "He is anxious to consult the Marble Head. Think you that the image will speak to the king?"

"The image never refuses its consent to those who seek it for a serious purpose," replied the old man.

"Good!" rejoined the Duke of Calatrava, in a tone of satisfaction. "I prayed the king and his retinue wait awhile in the corridor, that I might give you due warning of their approach."

"Thou hast done wisely," said the patriarch: "for it would please me but little to encounter the man who styles himself King of Asturias. Not that he would recognise me now, my lord," he added bitterly: "for the lapse of years,

corroding care, and a long prisongage have sadly changed my appearance. But I will nevertheless withdraw from the chance of encountering him."

The old man then hastened from the room by that same door through which he had issued and departed on the occasion of his interview with Algenora Tudela.

The Duke of Calatrava then returned to the wainscoted gallery, and informed the king that everything was now ready for his reception; and the royal party, traversing the spacious apartment, were guided by the ducal owner of the castle into the vaulted chamber containing the Enchanted Head.

There it stood, in the gloom of its own sombre marble and its repulsive sternness of aspect! Upon the table, too, was the mighty volume that chronicled the WISDOM flowing from its lips. But the book was shut now—and on its dark cover reposed the skull—that grim guardian of its mysteries!

The king and his courtiers advanced boldly, but the ladies, with the exception of Ildefonsa, the royal sisters, and one or two others, hung timidly and tremblingly together, their blanching cheeks and frightened looks denoting the depth of the mingled awe and terror which now swayed them.

Suddenly was heard that faint gushing sound resembling a current of air through a tube or conduit, which had so startled Joan when she stood in the presence of the portentous statue, and a half-stifled shriek wavered on the lips of the Princess Dolorosa and several of the younger ladies.

"Alphonzo!" said the Enchanted Image, in its profound and solemn voice—"what wouldest thou with me?"

"I seek thy counsel and thy

guidance in the cruel difficulties which perplex me," answered the king, the dauntlessness of his manner inspiring even the most timid of the fair ones with courage and resolution.

" More than a century hath elapsed," replied the Marble Head, " since in the Tower of Toledo I gave King Roderick that counsel which, if followed, would have saved his throne for himself and his people from the Moorish invaders. But he neglected my instructions—and he fell. Say, then, O King ! art thou prepared to take warning from his example and obey the words of wisdom ?"

" I am," responded the Asturian monarch, hope reviving in his breast.

" Then will I counsel thee to thy salvation, O King ! and to the security of thy throne," continued the Marble Head. " But thou and thy followers must adopt, in some respects, the instructions which I so vainly and fruitlessly gave Don Roderick upwards of a century ago. In another chamber ye will find many pieces of armour for nobles and knights—and many jewels ; and toilette ornaments for titled dames and lovely damsels. There is a spell alike upon the armour and the jewels ; and they will accomplish the happiness of those to whose lot they may fall. For the wearer of a single piece of that armour becomes invincible in battle, and she whose loveliness is decked with even the smallest or least valuable of those jewels, can force an entire army to fling down its weapons and kneel at her feet. Thou and thy nobles, then, O King !—yea, even thy lacqueys—must each take to his own separate apartment a piece of that armour and put it on—while every proud dame and beauteous lady must

bear, each to her own separate chamber also, a jewel or a perfume-box. No two nobles, no two dependants, and no two ladies must occupy the same room—but each man to his own apartment—and each woman to her own chamber likewise. Then, the armour being assumed by those whose sex it suits, and the ladies being adorned with the jewels or scenting the fragrance of the perfume-boxes—ye must all mount your horses and ride boldly towards Valladolid. Ye will journey without ceasing, ye and your steeds, though the distance be long—for the magic influence of the armour and the jewels will bear ye all rapidly on the way and dispel the sense of fatigue. On reaching Valladolid, the gates will fly open—the army of Gonzalez Andujar will fall at your feet—and the outlaw himself will crouch down, a suppliant for his life. Begone ! I have now spoken, and my lips become sealed again !"

" I thank thee, O wondrous image !" said the king, in a voice expressive of the deeply-seated awe which ruled him : and with these words he issued from the caverned chamber.

The Duke of Calatrava now led the way into the Chamber of the Skeletons ; but the curtain was closed over these grisly emblems of death, and he hurried through the place in profound silence, followed by the royal party, none speaking a word. But the nobles and the dependants felt a chill creep over them, and the ladies shrank together beneath the influence of an unknown fear, as they passed that dark curtain, for though they little dreamt what appalling objects were behind, they nevertheless experienced an instinctive terror as they threw their hurried looks upon it. Of all that party, the

Duke of Calatrava was alone aware of the meaning of that curtain and the spectacle which it veiled: and he was inwardly rejoiced to find it closed.

They now entered the chamber containing the torture instruments, the pieces of armour, and the jewellery.

The spectacle of those infernal engines and diabolical contrivances for dislocating, embowelling, tearing, compressing, and crushing the human form made the blood run cold in the veins of every individual belonging to the royal party—while several of the youngest ladies gave vent to subdued shrieks or startling ejaculations of horror. But the first feeling of dismay and affright having passed, they all promptly addressed themselves to the object of their visit to this chamber.

Every male member of the party proceeded to possess himself of a piece of armour. Some took helmets—others corselets—others, again, chose gauntlets or cuishes—and several chose hauberks of mail. Then the ladies divided amongst themselves the jewels, the ornaments, and the toilette articles,—some having necklaces—others bracelets—a few obtaining tiaras—and several preferring the scent-boxes and fragrance-bottles.

But not one of the nobles, knights or dependants, put on a single piece of the armour in that vaulted room; nor did any of the ladies tarry to clasp a bracelet or open a perfume-phial.

The orders of the Enchanted Head were definite and pointed in this respect; and no sooner were the martial accoutrements chosen and the jewels distributed, than the royal party quitted the caverned chamber.

Still conducted by the Duke of

Calatrava, the king and his followers traversed the room containing the skeletons—hastened through the well-furnished apartment, where Joan and Berthold were still hidden behind the screen—threaded the long wainscot-gallery—mounted a flight of marble steps—and reached the great hall communicating with the state chambers. There the king paused to express his thanks to the Duke of Calatrava for having introduced him into the presence of the Enchanted Image: and every heart now beat high with hope, and every glance flashed forth the radiance of joy—for it seemed certain that the dynasty of Alphonzo was saved, and that not only the rebellion of Gonzalez Andujar would be effectually crushed, but that the threatened invasion of the Moors would be easily repelled.

Josefa was soon in attendance to show the ladies each to a separate chamber, while Rodrigo performed the same duty towards the king, the nobles, and the other male retainers in the suite. The castle was spacious: and although about sixty apartments were thus required—the lacqueys being equally accommodated with separate rooms—there was no want of chambers for the purpose.

In a short time every individual of the royal party—man and woman—was duly lodged, according to the instructions delivered by the Enchanted Head,—the Duke of Calatrava making no exception on behalf of himself, but adhering to the general arrangement and shutting himself up in the solitude of his own chamber.

But we must now observe that scarcely had the royal party quitted the lower regions of the castle,—the men carrying the pieces of armour away with them, and the

women bearing the jewels and the ornaments—when the venerable-looking patriarch issued abruptly from the chamber into which he had retired, and apparently forgetting that Joan and Berthold were concealed behind the screen—indeed, most probably fancying himself alike unheard and unnoticed—he clasped his hands in a strange frenzy of excitement—exclaiming, “Oh! now at last the moment of vengeance has arrived—vengeance the most terrible, the most implacable, for all that I have suffered—for all that I have undergone!”

Horror-stricken, amazed, and bewildered at these fearful menaces, which they naturally believed to be levelled against the royal party who had just quitted the place, Berthold and Joan rushed forth from behind the screen, at the moment that the old man himself was hastening with incredible speed towards the wainscotted gallery.

“Ah! I had forgotten you, my friends!” he cried, stopping short as he found himself thus confronted by Berthold and his mistress. Then instantaneously recovering his self-possession, he said, “You must soon know all—you may as well learn the truth at once. Follow me!”

And bearing the lamp in his hand, he hastened along the gallery—the Abbot of Fulda and Joan keeping close at his heels.

But on reaching the extremity, where the ascent of marble stairs began, the noise of several doors closing in the great hall and the passages above met their ears; and the old man whispered in a voice that trembled with a nervous joy, “They are going to their separate chambers—they are obeying the instructions of the Marble Image—we must tarry here a few moments!”

Now, as Berthold and Joan, while hidden behind the screen, had not heard a single sentence uttered by the Enchanted Head, they were of course unaware of the instructions which its lips had given to the royal party, and they gazed upon the old man with increasing bewilderment and surprise.

A vague prescience of something dreadful about to take place, seized upon their imaginations; and this undefined feeling of horror was strengthened by the look which the old man’s countenance now wore. For all that was erst venerable and calculated to inspire respect and awe, had fled from his features, and his wonted aspect of benignity and kindness had changed into an expression of fiendish malignity.

Berthold and Joan, courageous and strong-minded though they both were, shrank back aghast from the altered appearance of the old man—for the effect produced upon them was the same as if they suddenly beheld an angel shape changing into a demon of unearthly hideousness.

“Ah! you may well gaze upon me with wonderment and mistrust, my friends,” he exclaimed, “for I know how unusual is the expression that has now fixed itself upon my features. But fear nothing on your own account! This is the hour of vengeance upon my foes—the day of reward for my friends is not far distant! And to you, Joan—to you, brave and heroic woman, am I indebted for more than I can ever repay, boundless as the testimonials of my gratitude shall be. But come—the clanging of doors has ceased—they are all in their own apartments now! Come, I say—and ye shall behold the results of the most appalling vengeance that ever an injured

mortal was yet enabled to wreak in this world!"

Wondering and amazed—startled and horrified—but not daring to question the old man relative to the meaning of words alike so mysterious and terrible—the Abbot of Fulda and Joan followed him in profound silence up the marble staircase, and in a few moments they reached the hall. It was deserted—every member of the royal party had been shown to a separate chamber—and Rodrigo and Josefa had retired to their own habitation in the entrance-tower.

But scarcely had the old man and his two terrified companions set foot in the great hall, when their ears were suddenly assailed by rending shrieks from the lips of agonising females, and hideous cries, yells, and execrations from the throats of desperate men. The sounds were horrible and appalling to a degree—rising suddenly as it were from the depths of a stupendous silence, and breaking upon the stillness of a deep midnight as if with the voices of a thousand murders!

Joan clung to Berthold in speechless dismay—and their horrified looks were fixed upon the old man, who seemed to listen with an infernal joy and fiendish triumph to the sounds of mortal agony.

But these sounds lasted only for a few instants, and appeared to be the abrupt short cries or yells of many persons suddenly stricken with a deathblow.

They died away in a moment—and then all was still!

"Old man, what means this tremendous tragedy?" demanded our heroine, suddenly inspired with the courage of despiration. "Speak—tell me—this suspense is intolerable!"

"Come and see," was the answer; and the old man hastened

to throw open, one after another, the doors communicating with the chambers wherein the royal party had been lodged.

Heavens! what hideous spectacles now met the gloating gaze of the terrible author of this implacable vengeance! From what fearful sights did the looks of Joan and Berthold turn shuddering away! Every chamber contained its corpse, every apartment had become a death scene for its victim! King—duke—chancellor—judge—lords—gentlemen—and lacqueys—all were martyrised by the atrocious vengeance of the old man. Princesses—titled dames—noble ladies—and lovely girls—all were immolated to the demon of his wrath.

For every piece of armour contained a hideous blade which started forth the moment a secret spring was touched by the act of putting that treacherous armour on, and the gash inflicted upon the flesh, instilled into the veins a poison so rapid and so subtle that its effects were sudden and blasting as the lightning-stroke.

Nor were the jewels and the other trinkets less dreadful in their ingenuity, or less prompt in doing the work of death.

For when the necklaces were put on, they contracted suddenly round the snowy neck, with a minute mechanism concealed in the large golden clasps—so that strangulation instantly ensued.

The bracelets, the rings, and the tiaras sent forth tiny points, sharp as needles, and tipped with a venom far more rapid in its effect than even that of the cobra-di-capello: while the pungent fragrance of the perfume-bottles, and the subtle powder inhaled from the scent-boxes were also fraught with the instantaneous power of death.

Sick at heart—with reeling brains

—and almost sinking beneath the load of insupportable sensations of horror, Berthold and Jean turned aside from the contemplation of the two or three first chambers into which they looked.

But the old man continued to inspect them all, one after the other.

The king had put on a helmet—and the blood flowing from the gash of the treacherous blade stained his cheek and was already clotting in gore upon his beard.

The Duke of Calatrava, with a corslet hanging loose upon his form, lay stretched upon the floor of his chamber, bleeding from the breast.

The Princess Dolorosa had placed a tiara of diamonds upon her brow. It had fallen off again as she reeled and sank in the sudden agonies of death—and a circle of small punctures was visible upon her otherwise pure and spotless brow.

The Lady Ildefonsa had inhaled the powder of a perfume-box, the effect of which had been prompt as the thunder stroke; and the old man was cautious not to advance beyond the threshold of the chamber where the venomous dust, the box having fallen on the floor, impregnated the atmosphere. The elder of Alphonzo's sisters had perished with the puncture of a bracelet—the younger was strangled with a necklace.

In fine, every individual, male and female, of the royal party, had been destroyed: not one was spared even by accident—chance had not favoured a single soul—but all were dead—dead!

Having satisfied himself that the destructive work had indeed been done wholesale—and having gloated for a time over the ghastly evidences of the tremendous tragedy

which was thus accomplished,—the old man returned to the great hall. But the instant Joan beheld him she covered her face with her hands, exclaiming,

“ Avaunt! avaunt! thou art a fiend in human shape! In serving thee, monster that thou art, I have sold myself to Satan!”

“ Yes, old man,” said the Abbot of Fulda, in a solemn tone, “ all the reverence that we lately experienced for thee has turned into loathing and abhorrence!”

“ Oh! had you suffered as I have suffered,” cried the aged individual to whom these bitter reproaches were addressed—“ you would have avenged yourselves as deeply—as implacably as I have done! Say, did not Gonzalez Andujar, the idol of your devotion, put to death the Archbishop of Valladolid?”

“ Canst thou show us, old man,” demanded Joan, “ that those whom thou hast immolated were as guilty as the prelate whom you have named?”

But ere the old man could reply to this question, there was a rush of footsteps approaching the great hall from the court-yard without—the door was flung violently open—and Rodrigo, Josefa, and Toro made their hurried appearance, with frightened looks,—exclaiming,

“ The Moors! the Moors!”

“ Heaven be thanked!” cried the old man, clasping his hands with as much fervour as if he had not come fresh as it were from the consummation of an appalling tragedy.

Then, before the warden or his wife had time to utter another word of explanation, the trappings of numerous steeds were heard galloping into the court-yard, and in a few moments a posse of armed Moors, having dismounted from their horses, entered the hall.

But no pen can describe the terror of Joan and Berthold when they recognised the formidable Kara Ali at the head of the band.

"By the prophet! we are destined to meet in every nook and corner of Spain," cried the Black Captain, his looks instantaneously settling upon our heroine and her lover. Then turning his eyes on the old man he said in a voice of profound respect,

"Art thou he in whom the mighty Abdu-rahman is so deeply interested?"

"I am," was the answer; and the old man's countenance beamed with joy.

"Then deign to accept the homage of one whose sword is at your service, and who is here to obey thy commands," said the Black Captain, with a profound salaam—an example which was immediately followed by all the Moors who were crowding into the place where this singular scene occurred.

"What is thy name, good friend?" asked the old man.

"Kara Ali, senor—better known as the Black Captain."

Ah! this is he, then, who figures in the narrative which you had begun to recite to me ere now?" exclaimed the old man, turning his looks inquiringly upon Joan and Berthold.

"The same," answered the latter. "He appears to be our sworn enemy."

"No, no—he shall be your enemy no longer," cried the old man. "This worthy couple are my friends, Kara Ali—and you also must regard them as such."

"Your wishes, senor, are a law to me," responded the terrible bandit: "for although I am ignorant who you are, it suffices that the great Abdu-rahman has enjoined me to regard you with the highest consi-

deration. Henceforth, then, the Senor Berthold Neckar and the Lady Gilbertus have naught to fear at my hands."

"We thank you for this assurance, Kara Ali," said Berthold; then turning to the old man, he observed, "Will you also use your influence with the Black Captain to obtain a similar promise on behalf of the African slaves who are attached to our service?"

"It is my command," said the old man, imperiously, "that Kara Ali does your behest in all things!"

The Black Captain placed his hand to his brow, as much as to imply, in the Moslem fashion, that he should deserve to lose his head if he disobeyed the orders thus given him; and he was about to deliver the messages which King Abdu-rahman had sent to the old man, when Rodrigo and Josefa, who had been exchanging hurried whispers, threw themselves at the feet of this aged and mysterious being.

"Now, gracious king," said Rodrigo, "that your Majesty's star is once more in the ascendant, deign to pardon those who have been instrumental in maintaining your long captivity."

"Rise, my worthy friends," exclaimed the old man, suddenly assuming all the regal air and potential mien which suited the high and sounding titles thus addressed unto him: "I have no cause to complain of you—and when restored to my longlost throne ye on your side shall have no reason to regret the many acts of kindness ye have done towards the injured Maure-gato!"

Joan and Berthold started, as if electrified by the same galvanic shock. A veil suddenly fell from their eyes—and the mystery concerning the old man was read. Yes—he was indeed none other than

the deposed king of Asturias,—that same Mauregato who concluded the treaty of the Hundred Virgins with the Moors, and who had so long been regarded as numbered with the dead.

Kara Ali and his men likewise comprehended, at the announcement of the name of Mauregato, wherefore they had been enjoined to treat the old man with such distinction—for it was now clearly apparent to them all that Abdurahman was taking up arms to restore the ancient ally of his father to the Asturian throne.

"Your Majesty will permit us to depart early in the morning?" said Berthold, as soon as Mauregato's attention was again turned towards him and Joan.

"Assuredly, if such be your desire," responded the dethroned monarch. "But I owe you both some explanations of past events as well as a large debt of gratitude for past services. The former I propose to give you early in the morning, ere your departure—the latter I shall repay the moment I again resume the crown and sceptre at Oviedo."

Berthold and Joan made no reply to these observations, but, with a low bow, they quitted the presence of Mauregato—returning by the secret chambers to their own apartments, and leaving the long-captive monarch to give such explanations as he might think fit, relative to the wholesale massacre which had that night been consummated at Calatrava Castle.

CHAPTER LVI

MAUREGATO'S NARRATIVE

AT about eight o'clock on the following morning Mauregato was seated in company with Joan and Berthold, whose manner

towards him was reserved though respectful.

They could not help feeling that, however great his sufferings might have been, he had nevertheless committed an enormous crime in wreaking so dread a vengeance especially as its effects had indubitably fallen upon many innocent persons. But they were anxious to hear his explanations, and moreover they were indebted to him for extending his protective influence not only to themselves, but likewise to Kiamil and Malagamba.

But we shall not dwell longer upon the various feelings that agitated in their minds, as they prepared to listen to the narrative which Mauregato now commenced in the ensuing manner:—

"In order that you may fully comprehend the strange, wild, and wondrous circumstances which have lately come to your knowledge, I must go back to the times of Don Roderick, the last of the Gothic kings. You are doubtless aware that this monarch was raised by a rebellion to the Spanish throne, his predecessor Witiza being put to death. But Witiza left behind him two sons named Vandelo and Siseburto, who disappeared suddenly and mysteriously after their sire's overthrow and execution.

"It was believed that they had fled from the country; and Don Roderick soon ceased to feel any apprehension or uneasiness relative to the despoiled and proscribed princes. You are likewise aware that Roderick, when holding his voluptuous court at Toledo, seduced Florinda La Cava, the daughter of Count Julian. He subsequently married another lady, refusing to do justice to the wronged and outraged Florinda, who, notwithstanding, was so infatuated with her

royal lover that she resided with him openly as his mistress. Count Juliano was deeply wounded by the king's perfidy ; and he meditated a sanguinary revenge.

"Vainly did he endeavour to withdraw his daughter from the court—Florinda was obstinate in remaining at the palace in the shameless condition of a royal concubine. Juliano cherished the loftiest notions of family honour, and, as I have already stated, he resolved upon a cruel and remorseless vengeance, in which his wanton daughter was to be included.

"One day, as he was wandering alone amongst the mountains in the vicinage of Toledo, brooding upon his wrongs and revolving in his mind a thousand different projects to avenge them, he found himself at length beneath the walls of a colossal tower which had for some time past been an object of wonder and mystery to the inhabitants of Toledo and the surrounding district.

"No one knew whether it was occupied or not ; and if it were, its occupants were never seen. But lights were often observed glimmering from its loop-holes, and superstition invested it with such terrors that few persons chose to approach its walls even in the broad daylight. It was therefore with no inconsiderable feeling of awe that Juliano perceived how his wandering footsteps had unconsciously brought him to the very foot of the Tower of Toledo, as it was then called.

"He was about to retire, when the gate opened suddenly, and an old nobleman, attached to the court of Don Roderick, and supposed to be one of his most faithful retainers, came forth and accosted Count Juliano.—'My lord,' he said, 'I need not ask if thou art brooding over thy wrongs and if thou yearnest for vengeance.'—'I would sell

my soul to Satan throughout all eternity,' replied Juliano, 'for one hour of complete revenge.'—'And I,' answered the nobleman, 'am no friend to Don Roderick.'—'I judged as much,' observed Juliano, 'by the question which thou didst put to me ; otherwise I should not have responded with so much frankness. Wilt thou help me to the wreaking of my vengeance ?'—'Follow me,' said the old nobleman : and he led the way into the tower.

Count Juliano now found himself in a hall magnificently furnished, and where two persons, of middle age and between whom a strong family likeness subsisted, were seated upon the downy cushions of a sofa. They rose to welcome the count, who to his infinite amazement recognised in these individuals the proscribed Princes Vandelo and Siseburto. After a long and earnest conversation, the Princes and the old nobleman proceeded to introduce Count Juliano to the mysteries of the tower.

"In one apartment there were a dozen jewellers employed upon necklaces, tiaras, bracelets, rings, armlets, and brooches ; while three are four workers in ivory and carvers of wood were manufacturing scent-boxes.

"In another room a number of armourers were engaged in their own special craft, and the din of their hammers immediately accounted to Juliano for the strange noises which, as rumour declared, were heard to emanate from the interior of the tower. But these armourers were not only employed in the fashioning of helmets, corselets, gauntlets, and cuishes ; they were likewise busy in perfecting a variety of instruments of torture which they had devised with a devilish ingenuity. Count Juliano

was then conducted into a third room fitted up as a laboratory, and where an old man, with a glass mask upon his countenance, was apparently engaged in alchemical pursuits.

"A furnace was blazing brightly : and he was attentively watching a retort whence a white fluid was distilling drop by drop into a small crystal cup. From the laboratory Count Juliano was led into a spacious apartment where some workmen were busily occupied in fixing a colossal statue in each corner, and where a sculptor was employed in putting the finishing stroke to a large marble bust, representing a priest.

"When the Count had viewed all these divers proceedings and had inspected the sundry objects of interest, Prince Vandelo explained to him their intended uses. The pieces of armour were furnished with sharp blades, which would start forth at the slightest touch of the hidden springs attached to them ; and the old alchemist was distilling a deadly poison wherewith to imbue these blades, and the virtue of which could never be destroyed by time, rust, or damp.

"The necklaces were so contrived as to contract suddenly round the throat, at the instant of being clasped, and thus produce strangulation ; the rings, bracelets, armlets, brooches, and tiaras were furnished with sharp points which would spring forth and puncture the flesh, and which were also to be tipped with the deadly venom compounded by the alchemist. The instruments of torture explained their own use.

"The four colossal statues, representing Gothic warriors, were hollow, and contained a curious mechanism for the purpose of raising the right arm of each. The

Marble Head was likewise hollow : and a thin tube or pipe, about an inch in diameter, passed from the interior of the lips through the pedestal into an apartment beneath —so that any one speaking at the lower extremity of this tube would send his voice reverberating through its entire length, and the words thus uttered would be plainly audible from the lips of the statue."

Here Berthold and Joan started and gave vent to ejaculations of surprise, for they were now suddenly made aware that everything concerning the presumed supernatural faculties of the Marble Head was imposture, and that its supposed enchantment dwindled down into the contrivances of an astute empiricism.

But Mauregato, taking no heed of the sensation which his words had produced upon his listeners, continued his strange narrative in the following terms:—

"All these contrivances which I have been explaining, were the means and materials by which the Princes Vandelo and Siseburto proposed to carry out the conspiracy they had formed against Don Roderick. The old nobleman, who was enormously rich was their secret friend ; and his wealth had purchased the jewels, the armour, and the various implements required to execute the plan. All the workmen were sworn to implicit secrecy ; and, lured by the prospect of future reward as well as inspired by the liberality of their present remuneration, they never quitted the tower, but proceeded actively and diligently with their labours.

"The grand aim of the conspirators was the destruction of Don Roderick and his whole court, women as well as men, the titled ladies being as dangerous in their influence and political intrigues as

the nobles and knights were formidable as martial leaders.

"I need hardly inform you that Count Juliano cheerfully joined this conspiracy—stipulating only that before his daughter received the punishment which he considered due to her profligacy, measures should be taken to compel Don Roderick to espouse her, so that the stain might be effaced as much as possible from the family escutcheon."

"With these terms the princes readily complied; and Juliano undertook to proclaim them joint sovereigns of Spain the instant the work of extermination relative to Don Roderick and his court should have been accomplished.

"In a few weeks all the arrangements were completed; and it only now remained to find a fitting opportunity to carry the scheme into execution. This occasion soon presented itself. Don Roderick gave a grand banquet, at which the old nobleman was present.

"The discourse turned upon the various legends, superstitions, and tales of enchantment so rife in the country; and at length the treacherous old noble cunningly threw out a few words which at once produced the desired result by directing universal attention to the Tower of Toledo.

"The king was fired by the topic; and, heated with wine, he resolved to explore the mysteries of that tower. All the nobles and knights consented to join him; and, mounting their steeds, away they sped to the mountains amongst which the edifice was built.

"Superstition and credulity have since enhanced many of the details connected with the visit, especially as to the mode by which an entrance was effected. The plain

truth is that the door was forced open by the impatient Roderick himself; and the royal party advanced into the tower. The conspirators were of course all out of sight; and the king, followed by his retainers, at length reached the spacious apartment where the proper arrangements had been made in furtherance of the plan.

"Meantime the four colossal statues, moved by their internal mechanism, had been thundering on the marble pavement with the butts of their lances, so as to infuse a superstitious awe into the minds of the king and his courtiers, and thus render them pliant and ductile to purposes which were only to be gained by thus working upon their feelings.

"The statues having ceased to thunder with their spears on the floor, the Marble Image addressed the king, Prince Vandelo himself speaking through the tube from the apartment below. The instructions which he gave are accurately preserved in the popular legend associated with Don Roderick's Tower.

"Those instructions I need not recapitulate, inasmuch as you have already informed me that you are well acquainted with the legend itself. The king and his followers quitted the tower, taking the armour, the jewels, and the instruments of torture along with them: but the result was not such as had been anticipated.

"The people of Toledo menaced the king with insurrection, if he dared to carry into effect the instructions of the Marble Head. The objects and articles conveyed from the tower were therefore thrown aside in the royal palace, and speedily forgotten amidst renewed festivities."

Here Mauregato paused for a few moments to take breath, and

then resumed his narrative as follows :—

" The conspiracy having failed, the Princes Vandelo and Siseburto betook themselves to a foreign clime—the workmen quitted the tower—and the old nobleman redoubled his attentions towards the king in order to save himself from suspicion, should any be entertained. Count Juliano subsequently went over into Africa, to invite the Moors into Spain.

" Meantime Florinda La Cava became the mother of a male child. But to avoid the crowning scandal of this exposure, she was confined in secret, at a humble cottage near Toledo—and the babe was left in the care of the peasant and his wife who occupied the hut. When the Moors landed in Spain these persons removed into the Asturian mountains, where they settled. Don Roderick was completely routed by the Saracens on the banks of the Barbate—and when he saw that the day was lost, he bitterly reproached himself for what he termed his cowardice in yielding to the menaces of his people at the time he was about to obey the instructions of the Marble Head.

" Compelled to fly, badly wounded, from the field of battle, he repaired in company with Florinda, and attended by only a few retainers, to the mysterious tower. There he consulted the Marble Head. But it answered him not. Believing that it was angry with him for having disobeyed its instructions, and naturally associating its presumed magic inspirations with the armour, the jewels, and the instruments of torture which had so long remained neglected at the palace of Toledo, he sent his retainers hither to bring them away if possible,

" The Moors had not yet advanced as far as that capital, and so great was the excitement prevailing there, that every one was attending to his own affairs instead of heeding the business of others. Thousands were leaving Toledo with all their portable possessions ; and thus the royal retainers were easily enabled to load their sumpter-mules with the articles they had been sent to fetch, and bring them away unmolested. But on their way back to the tower a rumour reached their ears to the effect that the Moors were marching upon Toledo, and Don Roderick, on hearing this intelligence, determined to fly at once with Donna Florinda. He gave orders that his retainers should follow with the objects just brought from the palace, and he directed them also to bring the Marble Head with them, if they could move it.

" This latter command was more easily obeyed than they had at first supposed, inasmuch as the image, being hollow, was of far less weight than it outwardly seemed. On removing it from the pedestal, the tube that penetrated it was broken close off ; and being enveloped in a large banner and packed on a war-chariot, it was easily removed from the tower.

" The retainers, with their convoy, soon overtook the fugitive king and La Cava ; and the whole party fled into the mountainous regions of Asturias. There they took refuge at the dwelling of the peasants to whom the illegitimate offspring of the defeated monarch and his mistress had been entrusted. The Marble Head was stood upright in the cottage, and thus the tubular contrivance with the opening in the pedestal passed unnoticed.

" I need hardly tell you that, when consulted, the image would

not speak, but Don Roderick did not despair. He preserved the jewels, the armour, and the instruments of torture, with scrupulous care clinging, with all the enthusiasm of a sanguine spirit, to the hope that his marble monitor would yet counsel him sooner or later, and teach him how to reconquer his kingdom.

"In a short time the then Duke of Calatrava (grandfather of the nobleman who perished last night with Don Alphonzo and the rest) arrived at his castle, whither he summoned all his vassals in the determination of making a desperate stand against the Moors, should they advance into the Asturian mountains.

"Don Roderick and La Cava now removed to Calatrava Castle; but their presence in that fortalice was kept profoundly secret, for fear that if the intelligence got abroad that the fugitive monarch had taken refuge there, the Saracens would at once march against the place. I must also observe that the Marble Head and the other objects so often alluded to, were likewise conveyed to the castle, where they were secretly deposited in the apartments belonging to the basement of the main building. The imposition which had been practised with regard to the image still escaped detection: but its lips of stone remained mute—and now Don Roderick was at last driven to despair."

Again Mauregato paused—but in a few moments he continued his extraordinary recital.

"In the meantime Count Juliano stricken by remorse at the ruin which his treachery had entailed upon his native land, quitted the Moorish encampment and wandered for some weeks amongst the northern districts of Spain. At

length his vagrant steps brought him to the Sierra de Oca; and being taken prisoner, despite the deep disguise that he wore, by some of the Duke of Calatrava's vassals, he was borne to the castle.

"There a solemn court-martial was held, the Duke himself presiding; and Count Juliano was condemned to death. Vainly did Florinda intercede for her unhappy father. The king rebuked her harshly for her tears—the duke rejected her urgent prayers—and Count Juliano was hanged upon the ramparts of Calatrava Castle. But before he thus expiated his perfidy towards his native land, he drew up a written statement of the whole particulars of the conspiracy formed by the Princes Vandelo and Siseburto; and in this document, penned by the wretched man in the supreme hour of his unavailing contrition for the past, he explained the imposture of the Marble Head and the terrible service which the jewels, the armour, and the toilette-articles had been contrived to perform.

"It was in this very room that Count Juliano was imprisoned—it was here that he spent the last few days of his chequered existence. From what I shall presently have to relate, it is probable that he deposited the document in an obscure nook behind the tapestry, that it might not be read until after his death. But more anon of the important statement which he thus drew up. He perished, as I have stated: and soon afterwards his daughter died of grief and despair.

"Nor did Don Roderick long survive the woman whom he had betrayed and the man who had betrayed him. His wounds mortified, and he breathed his last amidst the most excruciating agonies. The Duke of Calatrava, conceiving that some

terrible memorial should remain of the three persons to whose guilt a mighty nation had to attribute its colossal misfortunes, ordered the skeletons of Florinda La Cava, Don Roderick, and Count Juliano to be suspended in one of the vaulted chambers of the castle ; and this posthumous vengeance was consummated accordingly. It was not sufficient for the duke that the three guilty persons had died miserably : he inflicted this crowning indignity upon their remains ! ”

And as Mauregato thus spoke, his countenance assumed that malignant expression which Joan and Berthold had noticed the preceding night. But speedily composing his features, he continued his narrative in the following terms :—

“ Years flew away after the incidents which I have just detailed, and the son of Don Roderick and Florinda La Cava grew up to man’s estate. He espoused the daughter of the peasants who had reared him, and the issue of this marriage was myself.

“ I was born in the year 750. I am therefore now eighty-three. My parents named me Mauregato—they died when I was still a youth, leaving me their little possessions, which consisted of a cottage in these mountains, together with flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. But I soon became wearied of a peasant-life, and gathering together a small but devoted band, I made frequent incursions into the Moorish territory.

“ At last I was taken prisoner by the Saracens, and was conducted to Toledo, where Abdu-rahman the First then reigned. He was a brave warrior himself, and respected bravery in others ; he therefore treated me kindly, retaining me in a sort of honourable captivity. Some years elapsed, and at the

expiration thereof he gave me my release, upon the solemn condition that I would never again bear arms in hostility to the Moors, unless provoked by them in the first instance.

“ I returned into Asturias at the moment when the throne of Oviedo was rendered vacant by the death of a childless sovereign ; and my descent from Don Roderick now proved rather a recommendation in my favour, than a barrier in my path. To be brief, I was chosen King of Asturias ; but I had not long enjoyed the regal dignity, when Abdu-rahman collected his armies for the purpose of invading my realm and adding it to his own territorial possessions. I knew full well that inevitable disaster, defeat, and ruin, would be entailed upon the Asturians by the advance of the Moors ; and I considered it my duty to consolidate peace upon any terms. The compact of the Hundred Virgins was the result of negotiations with Abdu-rahman, and we met upon the frontiers, near Buytrago, to sign the treaty. On that occasion the Moorish monarch gave me a ring—a ruby ring—with his cyphers upon it ; and when he placed it upon the finger, as we were alone together in his royal pavilion, he said,

“ ‘ Mauregato, your subjects are restless, headstrong, and discontented. They will perhaps seek to do you an injury on account of this treaty. But in me you now possess, a faithful ally and a staunch friend. That ring, if at any time transmitted to me, shall be regarded as a signal that my succour is required. I swear by the prophet that I will never fly from my word in this respect. And I swear also on behalf of those who shall inherit my throne ; and I will exact a pledge from my son to maintain this treaty

after my death. Yes—even if years and years shall elapse, and though rumour should declare thee to be no more, yet shall the transmission of the ruby ring be regarded as an evidence that thou art indeed alive, and also as a proof that thou requirest succour. Farewell!

“Thus spoke King Abdu-rahman the First: and we separated.

“I returned to Oviedo, but my subjects, on hearing of the compact of the Hundred Virgins, flew to arms and rose in rebellion against me. I was suddenly made prisoner in my own palace, and the Duke of Calatrava—the same who perished last night, and who was at that period a fiery, hotheaded young man of two-and-twenty—hurried me away, in the custody of his adherents, to this castle.

“The whole proceeding took place so abruptly, and during the journey from Oviedo hither I was so closely guarded, and watched, that I had no opportunity of sending the ruby ring to Abdu-rahman. On arriving at the castle, I was imprisoned in this very chamber, and soon afterwards the duke informed me that a stripling prince, named Alphonzo, had been chosen king, and had decreed against me a sentence of captivity for life.

“I nevertheless secretly hoped that Abdu-rahman would hasten to my rescue, even without the transmission of the ring as an invocation of his succour: but when week after week, and month after month passed away, I began to despair. Then the fatal thought struck me that the Moorish monarch doubtless imagined me to be resigned to my fate: and this conjecture on my part was speedily confirmed. For one day when the Duke of Calatrava visited the castle, he informed me that Abdu-rahman had sent ambassadors to Oviedo to

demand my release; but that Alphonzo, the new king, had assured the Moorish envoys that I had voluntarily abdicated the throne and had retired to a monastery, there to pass the remainder of my days in penitence. Thus was my last and only hope destroyed!”

The old man paused to gather his reminiscences for the ensuing portions of his history; and in a brief space he proceeded as follows:—

“The Asturians soon found that they had gained little by their change of sovereigns. Alphonzo, backed by the army, which he bribed heavily, pursued the dictates of his own will as he chose and adopted my policy with regard to the Moors. He confirmed the treaty of the Hundred Virgins in order to maintain peace: and by dint of martial terror he put down all attempts at insurrection. Meantime I was making singular discoveries at Calatrava Castle.

“First of all, I found an old manuscript concealed in a nook behind the tapestry of this room, and having cleansed it of the accumulated dust, I managed, though with much trouble, to decypher its contents. It was Count Juliano’s narrative; and it revealed all the mysteries which in the popular legend were associated with Don Roderick’s Tower.

“Next I discovered the secret door behind the tapestry, and descending to the chambers below, I found the three skeletons—the Marble Head—the jewels, the armour, and the implements of torture. The bones of the skeletons were falling apart—the image was shapeless with dust—the jewels were dimmed and faded—the pieces of armour and the torture-implements were covered with rust. But Count Juliano’s manuscript

had inspired me with dreams and hopes of vengeance, and I set to work to cleanse and preserve the various objects I had thus discovered. Night after night did I descend into the vaulted chambers and pursue my task. Making myself acquainted, in the first instance, with the nature and position of the secret springs that moved the ghastly blades in the armour or sent forth the penetrating points from the jewels, I handled them carefully so as to avoid becoming the victim of their envenomed fangs. In a short time I had furbished up the armour—cleansed the torture-instruments—and polished the jewels and toilette ornaments. Then I turned my attention to the Marble Head, and having scraped off the thick incrustation, I reflected upon the best means of furnishing the image with a new voice-conduit or tube. This was a matter of some difficulty—but at length I succeeded in manufacturing a pipe of leather, by cutting up a mat formed of the raw skin of an ox. The room in which the Marble Head had been placed, is the same where it now stands. Next to that room is a smaller chamber—the same which you, Joan, have seen me issue from and also enter.

"To bore a hole in that partition-wall with one of the many pointed weapons at my disposal, was comparatively an easy task; and the leathern tube, being properly attached to the piece of metal pipe that remained inside the image, was carried through the wall, so that the statue was in one chamber and the extremity of the conduit in the other. By the time all these preparations were concluded, three years of captivity had passed away."

Mauregato heaved a profound sigh as he spoke thus of the past,

and then proceeded with his narrative.

"Scarcely were my arrangements completed, and just as I was beginning to find leisure to wonder whether they would ever result in anything favourable to my vengeance or my views—when the Duke of Calatrava paid me a second visit. His looks were gloomy: and with some hesitation he at length imparted the object of his coming. The usurper Alphonzo had ordered me to be put to death; and the duke was charged to see the sentence carried into execution. 'No, my lord,' I said, in a solemn tone and without losing my presence of mind, 'you cannot perpetrate this atrocity because the fates have decreed, that he who slayeth the descendant of Don Roderick, shall himself die a violent death.'—'What meanest thou?' demanded the Duke in amazement.—'I do but repeat the words of the Marble Head,' was my answer,—'Explain yourself,' said the Duke with increasing surprise,—'Knowest thou not,' I asked, 'that the Enchanted Head, and all the talismanic objects pertaining to its spells, are in the caverned chambers beneath? Those objects defy the ravages of time, and are now as undimmed and as bright as they were when my ancestor Don Roderick first beheld them in the Tower of Toledo.'

"The Duke, with increasing amazement, declared that he had vaguely heard of these things being in the castle, but that he had never seen them. I bade him follow me; and we descended into the chambers. He inspected the armour, the torture-instruments, and the jewels with mingled curiosity and awe, but not offering to touch them. Then I assured him it was the spectre of my ancestor

King Roderick, that had one night visited me in the solitude of my prison-room, and conducted me down into these vaulted and long-neglected regions of the castle, and I likewise showed him the three skeletons. 'But the Marble Head!' he exclaimed impatiently.—'In that chamber,' was my answer, "but I dare not accompany you into its persence."—He accordingly entered alone. I hastened into the next room, and spoke to him through the tube, so that the image appeared to be enjoining him to spare my life on peril of his own. The stratagem succeeded—he came forth, pale and trembling, but having implicit faith in the magical powers of the Enchanted Head. Nevertheless, as he feared that Alphonzo might some day choose to visit his castle and require to behold my tomb, he caused a mural tablet to be placed in one of the chambers which had been originally fitted up as an oratorio, or chapel; and on that tablet was inscribed a record of my death. This happened forty years ago," observed Mauregato, with another profound sigh.

"Yes—the tablet ascribes your Majesty's death to the year 793," observed Joan.

"The Duke of Calatrava," continued Mauregato, "was narrow-minded and vindictive. As an Asturian, he smarted under the sense of national disgrace on account of the compact of the Hundred Virgins, although he had not the courage to urge Alphonzo to refuse the tribute to the Moorish sovereign. But in order to wreak his spite upon me, though having spared my life, he commanded me to pen, from his dictation, that manuscript which you, Joan, discovered in the drawer of the table standing beneath the mural tablet. He then exacted from me a solemn

promise, ratified upon oath, that I would peruse this manuscript every morning and every night, as a penitence for what he termed my treachery towards the Asturian people. He likewise commanded me to put together the bones of the skeletons and maintain them in a state of preservation, so that he might constantly be reminded by their presence of the misdeeds of my three ancestors, Don Roderick, Florinda La Cava, and Count Juliano. He moreover ordered that I should take up my abode in that long-neglected portion of the castle; and finally, he enjoined me to chronicle in a book all that the Marble Head might at any time say to me. His trusty steward was appointed to be my goaler; and, withdrawing the entire garrison from the castle, he returned to Oviedo.

"Years passed away, and my captivity continued.

"The old steward died, and was succeeded by his son, the present warden Rodrigo. This man has behaved kindly to me; and of late years I have been permitted to roam about the castle at will, escape without his cognizance being impossible. The duke has visited me at intervals: and in order to sustain in his mind a belief in the miraculous properties of the Marble Head, as well as to while away the heavy-hanging time, I chronicled in a large book a variety of maxims and sayings which I ascribed to the wisdom of the image. I likewise, in some morbid and scarcely accountable humour, so arranged one of the arms of the central skeleton that by the aid of a communicating string to be pulled in the large apartment, that arm could be raised; and I furnished the fleshless hand with a dart selected from amongst the weapons in the chamber containing the armour.

"Perhaps I thought at the time that the awe-inspiring effect of such a life-like movement on the part of the skeleton would aid in enhancing that superstitious state of mind which would be necessary, if ever the opportunity should serve, to place my enemies within my power. For I lived upon the hope that Alphonzo might some day visit the castle: and I felt assured that should any serious perplexities spring up around him, his friend the Duke of Calatrava would advise him to consult the Marble Head. Therefore was it that I kept the armour free from rust and the jewels bright and brilliant: for a secret presentiment ever inspired me with the conviction that the day of vengeance would come at last, however long the interval might be.

"Years elapsed—I grew old—my beard turned to silver—and yet that burning hope lived within me. I cherished it, because it was all that made existence tolerable. Let me pass over the flight of time, and bring my narrative down to those recent events which especially concern yourself, Joan. One night—it was at the close of September—a portion of the Hundred Virgins claimed the hospitalities of the castle, and Rodrigo dared not refuse. On that same night you, my friends, also became inmates of the fortress. Rodrigo warned me of the presence of so many guests, and enjoined me to keep to my own apartments. But my heart bounded within my breast—for I now fancied that I beheld, for the first time since my captivity, an opportunity of communicating with the Moorish sovereign.

"I knew that Abdu-rahman the First was dead: but I felt assured that he had fulfilled his promise by naming to his son and successor the circumstances connected with the

ruby ring. I stole up the secret staircase and listened at the door behind the tapestry. I heard you, my friends, conversing upon your affairs—and your discourse betrayed the reason wherefore you, Berthold, then wore the black skull-cap. I likewise found, to my ineftable joy, that you, Joan, were a woman of strong mind, romantic disposition, and aspiring character; and you must pardon me for confessing that I resolved to make you the agent and means of my release from a long, long captivity of forty-three years.

"You, Berthold, retired to rest—and when you slept, I showed myself at the doorway behind the tapestry, in order to entice you, Joan, to penetrate into the vaulted chambers below. The artifice succeeded. You descended—you examined the objects in the first of these rooms—and you entered the chamber of skeletons. To put your courage to the test, I caused the grisly remains of Don Roderick to raise its fleshless arm. You gave vent to a cry—and I was fearful that I had gone too far.

"But you advanced into the large apartment: and then Algenora made her appearance. I knew that you were concealed behind the screen and that you heard all that passed. Conceive my inward satisfaction when Algenora confessed that she, a plebeian's daughter, was beloved by Aurelio, the son and heir of my enemy, the Duke of Calatrava!

"I saw instantaneously that, if another and more dreadful vengeance should be denied me, it would still prove a gratification to be instrumental in accomplishing a marriage so well calculated to wound the lofty pride of the Duke of Calatrava. But the thought at the same time flashed to my brain

that chance had now thrown in my way a golden opportunity of rendering you, Joan, subservient to my own purposes through the medium of those generous sympathies that I felt sure would be enlisted in favour of Algenora.

" I accordingly gave this young lady certain vague and undefined promises of succour: and we separated. The next phase in the night's adventures was your entrance into the chapel: and while you were there, I stole into the chamber of the Marble Head and opened the book at a place where a maxim was written that fortunately seemed to apply to the aspirations of your lofty soul. Retreating to the next room, I awaited the event.

" Everything progressed according to my sanguine expectations. You passed from the chapel into the presence of the Enchanted Image—and I made it address you in terms suitable to my purpose. Then came our interview in the large apartment, and the discourse which took place between us confirmed me in the exalted opinion I had formed of you.

" You know the rest. The object of the written instructions which I placed in your way next morning, and which you perused at Madrid, is now easy of comprehension. That object was twofold. It was to effect Algenora's deliverance, so that she might espouse Aurelio. But its grand and principal aim was to place you in a position so as to ensure a prompt and immediate interview with Abdurahman the Second on your arrival at Cordova.

" And now, Joan—now, Berthold—answer me frankly—and say whether you can blame me for having taken advantage of your generous disposition to work out

my release from a long, long captivity! Tell me also whether the heroic feelings with which I inspired you, Joan Gilbertus, through the medium of the Marble Head, have not already urged you on to deeds which must invest your name with a lasting renown. Your adventures at this castle were the origin of that career which, in the incredibly short space of a few weeks, has been already characterised by the grand exploits you achieved under the walls of Valladolid. The future destinies of this career, so brilliantly begun, are in your own hand."

Mauregato paused for a few moments, and then said,

" My friends, if I have consummated a terrible vengeance you must admit that I have been fearfully provoked. Alphonzo, his family and his courtiers, were my natural enemies—and I have extirpated them all. It is true that many of those who died last night had never seen me—never injured me—and even believed that I myself was numbered with the dead long years ago. But they were the relatives or the retainers of my mortal foe, and that was enough. Besides, I could not have spared some and doomed the rest to die. The survivors would have discovered me in the chambers below and have immolated me in their rage—for I knew not then that the Moors were so close at hand.

" As for yourselves, Berthold and Joan, I owe you so deep a debt of gratitude, that there are no honours—no rewards—no favours, that I am not prepared to lavish upon you. Tell me, then," exclaimed the aged Mauregato, rising from his seat and assuming all the dignity of a monarch,—" tell me, my friends, what mark of gratitude and

of affection you first desire of the King of Asturias!"

"Grant us permission to take our leave of your Majesty forthwith," said Berthold, after consulting Joan with a rapid exchange of glances: "and we shall seek no other boon at your hands."

"Be it as you will, my friends," observed Mauregato, with difficulty concealing his chagrin at this cold response: "but let me hope that when once again seated on the throne at Oviedo, I may number Berthold Neckar and Joan Gilbertus amongst my most honoured guests."

The king paused not for a reply—but hastened from the room.

Half-an-hour later, Joan and Berthold, attended by Kiamil and Malagamba, took their departure from Calatrava Castle, on whose highest tower the royal standard of Asturias was floating in the breeze of morn.

CHAPTER LVII

THE BATTLE OF BUYTRAGO

BERTHOLD and Joan, accompanied by the faithful Africans, made the best of their way towards Valladolid. But the intelligence of the dread and marvellous occurrences which occurred at Calatrava Castle, spreading like wild-fire, reached that city a day previous to their arrival; and as they drew near the walls they found the fields and plains on the eastern side covered with the countless tents of Gonzalez Andujar's army.

The moment Joan was recognised by the soldiers, the report began to circulate through the encampment that the heroine had returned; and the brave warriors thronged to give her a cordial wel-

come. A guard of honour was immediately formed, and in this manner was Joan, together with her companions, escorted into the city, where the inhabitants likewise crowded upon her path to do homage to her valour.

In a short time our travellers reached the palace, where they were affectionately received by Gonzalez Andujar and his beauteous bride, as well as by Aurelio and Algenora—now Duke and Duchess of Calatrava. Joan and Berthold were enabled to confirm the strange and wild rumours which had reached Valladolid upon the previous day—how Mauregato had suddenly appeared again upon the grand theatre of the world—how Alphonzo and all his retainers, including Aurelio's father, had been put to death—how Kara Ali, at the head of a thousand Moors, was in possession of Calatrava Castle—how Mauregato had hoisted the royal standard as an emblem of his resumption of the monarchical dignity—and how Abdu-rahman's object in declaring war against Asturias was to confirm the long-captive sovereign in the possession of his throne.

Then did the countenance of Gonzalez Andujar become radiant with patriotic fervour—and advancing to the window of the palace, whence the eye could command a view of the numberless pavilions and tents that stretched far across the plains beyond the walls, he said,

"Mauregato shall never more reign in Asturias, nor shall Abdu-rahman plant the crescent upon our ramparts and towers, so long as that brave army owns me as its chief!"

"And I," exclaimed Joan, catching the inspiration of the enthusiasm which animated the Asturian hero,—"and I shall once

more buckle on my armour and combat by your side!"

"To-morrow morning we will commence our march, brave Joan," said Gonzalez Andujar; "and if we meet not King Abdu-rahman's army before we reach the frontiers at the head of our own, we will at once carry the war into the Moorish dominions."

Then the charming and blushing Isabella accosted her heroic husband, and flinging her arms round his neck, she besought permission to accompany him on his grand and important expedition. With tears in her eyes but winning smiles upon her lips, did she enforce her prayer—urging that if he were successful, she would wish to be the first to congratulate him upon his triumph—but that if he should succumb to a superior force she ought to be near to console him.

Embracing his lovely wife with fervid affection, Gonzalez Andujar at once acceded to her demand, while Algenora obtained a similar boon from her own husband, the young Duke of Calatrava.

Joan now related all the particulars which she had heard from the lips of Mauregato, whose wild and romantic history, as thus recounted by our heroine, was heard with the deepest interest by Gonzalez Andujar, Isabella and the Duke and Duchess of Calatrava.

On the following morning Joan arrayed herself once more in her shining armour, and while Malagamba was assisting at the iron toilette Berthold quitted the chamber. He did not speedily reappear, and our heroine, now completely clad in her glittering panoply, descended to the apartment where the morning meal was served.

Gonzalez Andujar, in his plain black armour, and with the sable plumage waving over his helmet,—

the young Duke of Calatrava, likewise clad from head to heel in a martial suit—together with Isabella and Algenora, both of whom were dressed in travelling attire—these were already gathered in the apartment.

But Berthold was not there; and Joan, smitten with a feeling of uneasiness, was about to make inquiries concerning him, when she observed a peculiar smile upon the countenances of Gonzalez and Aurelio. She glanced towards Isabella and Algenora, and noticed that they wore looks of arch significance. But her curiosity was soon enhanced into wonderment and delight, when the door opened, and Berthold, arrayed in complete armour, entered the room.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Joan, joy and admiration flashing from her eyes; "are you about to take part in the coming struggle?"

"Think you, my beloved Joan," inquired Berthold, the flush of enthusiasm appearing upon his countenance—"think you that while you are perilling your life in this glorious cause I can consent to remain in dastard idleness? No, my Joan—it were impossible! Last evening I communicated my intention to our friends here present; and they persuaded me to keep my secret and prepare for you this surprise."

Then Joan understood the meaning of the smiles and arch looks which had bewildered her a moment before: and, with tears in her eyes but the most exalted heroism in her heart, did she applaud her lover's gallant resolution.

The whole party, including Kiamil and Malagamba, and followed by pages and squires, speedily issued from the palace, and mounting their horses they rode through Valladolid to the eastern gate.

How different was now the feeling that animated the priesthood, the aristocracy, and the middle classes of Valladolid—how different now was that feeling towards Gonzalez Andujar from what it once had been!

They joined the crowds of the working class that thronged in his way—they implored him to save Asturias from the domination of the Moors—and they were the first to raise the thrilling cry that Gonzalez Andujar should be their King.

Having received this ovation in their progress through Valladolid, the heroic party issued forth from the walls and joined the army. The tents had been struck at day-break, and the light troops had already commenced their march under the gallant Madoz—so that when Gonzalez Andujar and his companions made their appearance, the bulk of the glorious armament was set in motion.

* * * * *

In the evening of the sixth day after the departure from Valladolid, the Asturian and Moorish armies came within sight of each other in the vicinage of Buytrago.

The latter force, consisting of eighty thousand men, was commanded by King Abdu-rahman in person—while Gonzalez Andujar's forces did not number half that amount.

But the brave Asturians lost none of their enthusiasm on hearing that their numerical strength was so greatly inferior to that of the Moslem enemy. They placed the most exalted confidence in the judgment, tact, and valour of their chief—they remembered the victories won beneath the walls of Valladolid—and they were moreover inspired to no inconsiderable

degree by the presence of the heroic Joan.

Late in the evening, Mauregato, escorted by Kara Ali's band, joined the Moslem army, and an interview immediately took place between him and Abdu-rahman.

The latter received the old man in his splendid pavilion, which was brilliantly lighted; and when Mauregato appeared in his presence, he rose from his seat, embraced him, and hailed him King of Asturias. So confident, indeed, were they of success, that they discoursed upon the future policy to be pursued by Mauregato, and arranged the preliminaries for the treaties alike offensive and defensive, that were henceforth to subsist between them.

The battle commenced at day-break.

The young Duke of Calatrava commanded the right wing of the Asturian army, and General Madoz the left. Gonzalez Andujar, accompanied by Joan and Berthold, and having Kiamil as his standard-bearer, led the main body of his troops. Isabella, Algenora, and Malagamba remained at a house about a mile in the rear of the Asturian army.

The Moorish forces were commanded by their king in person, the divisions being entrusted to the charge of his most renowned warriors. Many of these had succumbed to the prowess of Gonzalez Andujar at the tournament in Cordova, and they burned to wipe away the stain of those defeats. Kara Ali was not the least anxious of them all to measure weapons once more with the Asturian hero; and it was his band that commenced the attack upon the centre of the Christian forces.

And soon the engagement became general.

Then rose to heaven the din of

deadly strife, the braying of clarions, the beat of drums and the clash of arms. The squadrons of cavalry thundered across the plains—the countless arrows swept like the gush of birds through the air—and the ground appeared to rock and reel under the tramp of careering horsemen and charging infantry. The earth was strown with the dying and the dead—riderless steeds galloped madly away from the precincts of the contest—and every inch of ground was disputed with the most desperate valour.

When the sun gained its meridian point, the combat was raging as furiously as if it had only just commenced, although it had now lasted many hours. But the chances of the day had as yet shown in favour of neither side. On, on rushed the Moorish hosts—on, on swept the Asturian chivalry!

At length Gonzalez Andujar and Kara Ali met hand to hand. For a few minutes the conflict between them was sustained with a courage worthy of both—but the brief struggle was decided in favour of Gonzalez Andujar, and the Black Captain was hurled lifeless from his horse. Thus ended the redoubtable Kara Ali.

Side by side, did Berthold and Joan bear their part in the deadly struggle, and while a preternatural strength appeared to nerve the arm of the heroine, her lover comported himself with an energy that was positively wondrous when considered in reference to his failing health and enfeebled frame.

Nor less did the African Kiamil dauntlessly and efficiently defend with his sweeping scimitar the banner entrusted to his care.

On the right wing of the Asturian army, the young Duke of Calatrava set a glorious example, which his troops failed not to fol-

low; while on the left, the intrepid Madoz proved worthy of the confidence which his general had reposed in him. Thus did the conflict proceed with unabated vigour until nearly six o'clock in the evening, when Gonzalez Andujar, at the head of a compact band of mounted warriors, dashed amidst the flower of the Moorish chivalry; and cutting his terrible way through the Moslem knights, made straight for the spot where Abdu-rahman was posted on an eminence, directing the movements of his mighty army.

By the side of the Moorish king appeared Mauregato—each mounted upon a splendidly caparisoned charger, and attended by a gorgeous train of squires, pages, and African slaves.

The desperate attack now made by Gonzalez Andujar, not only broke the Moslem ranks and threw them into an inextricable confusion—but also carried the conflict into the very heart of the Moorish army. In a few minutes the Asturian hero and his immediate companions—amongst whom were Joan, Berthold, and Kiamil—were completely isolated from the rest of the Christian forces, and being instantaneously hemmed in by the Moors, their utter destruction seemed inevitable.

But Gonzalez Andujar fought with the fury of a man who had staked the fortune of the day upon the accomplishment of some desperate deed—right and left did he mow down the Moslem warriors, his trenchant brand glancing amongst their ranks like a sickle in the corn-field—and thus literally cutting his way through the thronging hosts of the enemy, he dashed on his thundering steed up to the very spot where Abdu-rahman was posted.

The Moorish body-guard—the armed pages—and the terrible Africans, with their huge scimitars, instantaneously formed a circle about the king and his companion Mauregato. But Gonzalez Andujar, alike invincible and invulnerable, dashed furiously on—beat down all opposition—and seized upon Abdu-rahman.

A panic now took possession of the Moors—they were struck with the idea that the Asturian hero bore a charmed life—and they fled in confusion.

The Christian soldiers pressed on to support their chief—the rout of the Moslems became general—Abdu-rahman was held prisoner—and Mauregato, in endeavouring to fly, was thrown from his horse and trampled to death by the fugitive squadrons.

It was during this phase in the tremendous battle of Buytrago,—when the Moors were flying in all directions—when their king was conducted a prisoner into the Christian lines—and when the Mussulman avalanche which had fallen so menacingly upon the frontiers of Asturias, was broken into pieces—and melting rapidly away—it was in the midst of all the excitement, hurry, bustle, and din of this crowning catastrophe, that Berthold's horse was suddenly struck by a random arrow. Rearing up in the convulsion of its mortal agonies the maddened steed flung its rider heavily to the ground, and then sank dead upon him.

With a scream of terror Joan leapt from her own horse—dragged her lover from beneath the weight of his steed—and raised the vizor of his helmet.

But, oh! with what a pang of excruciating agony—with what a feeling of dire and poignant anguish—did she mark the unmistakable

traces and unerring evidences of dissolution upon his countenance.

The heroine again relapsed into the tender and loving woman, the eyes that a moment before had flashed with the fires of chivalrous enthusiasm, once more became the fountains of the heart and gushed with the living stream of ineffable woe—and the bosom that had heaved proudly in its prisonage of steel, was now convulsed with an immitigable grief.

She tore off her helmet—she pressed her lips to those of her dying lover—she besought him, in accents of maddening despair, to answer her words.

But though he gazed up at her with the fond and eloquent look of complete consciousness, the seal of death was already upon his lips; and, scarcely able to believe that so awful a calamity had overtaken her, the wretched Joan beheld his heavy eyelids droop—and the next instant close for ever.

And the cold cheek of the Abbot of Fulda felt not the pressure of Joan's, as she threw herself upon him in the wild delirium of despair.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE PAPAL ELECTION

NEARLY twenty-two years had elapsed from the date of the glorious battle of Buytrago. It was now the month of July, 855;—and the scene of our narrative is changed to the Eternal City of Rome.

Pope Leo IV. had breathed his last, the remains of the monarch-priest were interred with the customary ceremony—and the solemn conclave of Cardinals assembled at the Lateran Palace to elect a new Pontiff.

The great square in front of the

building—the diverging streets—the neighbouring ramparts and eminences—the casements, galleries, and balconies, even to the roofs, of all the houses—the very steeples, church-tops, and columns, in the vicinage of the Lateran, were thronged with countless spectators. Wherever a footing could be established or a hold maintained,—wherever a face could obtain peeping room or agile limbs could climb,—there were throngs of anxious gazers. All eyes were fixed upon the palace: and every time the huge bronze gates unfolded, the dead stillness of suspense prevailed amongst that countless multitude. But when, some official dependant came forth, instead of one of the Cardinals making his appearance to announce the result of the election, the murmur of disappointment and impatience succeeded to that solemn silence.

The weather was glorious—the day most auspicious for the pomp, pageantry, and magnificence of the procession that was presently to take place. Those who have never visited Italy, can form no idea of the splendour of an Italian sky in the midst of summer—when the full round orb of day pours a flood of golden light upon the scene, and when the resplendent glare bronzes every proud dome, haughty tower, and tapering pinnacle.

Such a sun-lit sky now overarched the smiling land of Italy, and thus steeped in burnished glory was mighty Rome!

It was mid-day: and at the extremity of one of the streets leading towards the square of the Lateran, an elderly individual, dressed in a dusty travelling garb as if he had just arrived from a long journey, endeavoured to work his way through the crowd: but so dense

was the pressure that being compelled to desist, he muttered an imprecation in the German language, and turned back. At the same instant he ran against a short, dark, active, ~~middle-aged~~ individual, who, receiving a contusion from the violence of the encounter, gave vent to an equally impatient ejaculation, which was however in the Spanish language.

"By all the Saints!" cried the latter, now surveying the German with the utmost attention: "I never was more mistaken in all my life, if thou art not my ancient patron and travelling-companion, Dr. Julius Engelheim of Mayence?"

"Is it possible that I thus encounter the worthy Paquo, the interpreter, in the streets of Rome?" exclaimed the German physician.

"It is none other, I can assure you doctor," replied the Asturian. "But let us ensconce ourselves in this tavern for a short half-hour, and talk over old matters. If you feel any interest in the result of the papal election, you will learn the issue soon enough: and if you be desirous of seeing the elect, your curiosity may be gratified presently—for whoever the fortunate cardinal is, he will pass this way in solemn procession after the declaration of the ballot whereby he is chosen."

"I accept your proposition, friend Paquo," rejoined Dr. Engelheim; and they accordingly entered the tavern pointed out by the interpreter."

This house of entertainment was close by Nero's Pillar: and as the windows commanded a view of the street along which the papal procession would pass in due course, it was thronged with guests.

Nevertheless, Paquo and Dr. Engelheim soon engrossed the attention of the landlord when they

gave their command for some substantial fare and good wine; and he compelled some less profitable customers to make room for them at a table in the recess of one of the windows.

"You seem as if you had just arrived from a long journey, doctor," said Paquo, as he helped himself to the good things that were speedily served up.

"I am always travelling," answered Engelheim, his look suddenly becoming gloomy and his words being accentuated with bitterness. "For the last twenty-two years of my existence have I been travelling—and I shall continue to travel thus, until I attain the object of which I am in search."

"Truly, this object must be well worth so much looking after!" exclaimed Paquo.

"It has become the object of my life," responded Engelheim, with a species of monomaniac dogmatism.

"I remember full well," observed Paquo, "that you were travelling when I first had the pleasure of forming your acquaintance, in search of that same Joan who soon afterwards rendered herself so celebrated in the wars of Gonzalez Andujar, the present King of Asturias—those same wars, indeed, which raised him to the throne. Let me see—it must be about twenty-two years ago, as nearly as I can recollect. But surely you have not ever since been travelling in search of that same Joan Gilbertus?" he added, inquiringly.

"Yes—in search of that same Joan Gilbertus," answered Dr. Engelheim, emphatically repeating Paquo's last words.

"Heavens! Are you not yet cured of your love for a lady who would have naught to do with you when you were younger and better

looking—pardon the observation—than you are now?"

"My love was already extinguished when I sought to yield her up to the stake in Asturias," replied the physician, the cloud lowering upon his weather-worn countenance, and his voice acquiring a more ominous depth of tone.

"Then wherefore have you pursued her so long?—and why are you pursuing her now?" demanded Paquo. "What feeling animates you?"

"Vengeance!" returned Engelheim, with a bitter accentuation of the syllables, and he fixed his sinister look steadfastly upon the interpreter.

"Is it possible that your hatred of this woman can be so deep—so undying?" asked Paquo, putting aside the wonted flippancy of his manner and catching somewhat of the physician's seriousness, without its malignity.

"Oh! I perceive that you cannot comprehend a hatred so profound—so unmitigated as this?" said Engelheim, glancing about him to see that he was not overheard by the other guests in the room. But they were so intent upon watching for the slightest appearance of excitement amongst the crowd below Nero's pillar, that they took no heed of the two foreigners, who were moreover conversing in the German tongue.

"I must admit that I cannot understand so implacable a craving for revenge," observed Paquo,— "especially as the lady did you no particular injury by preferring another; and, after all, you are not the first man in the world who has suffered with disappointed love."

"It may be a morbid feeling on my part—it may even be a wickedness, Paquo," said the German

doctor : " but it is not the less profoundly seated in my mind, and impossible of extirpation. I could have adored that woman as devotedly as I have learned to hate her bitterly. There was a time—when she lived at Mayence—that I could have fallen down and worshipped her—aye, have kissed the soil upon which she trod. I was rich—and I would have made her the mistress of my fortune ; I was famous—and she would have borrowed lustre from my renown."

" Methinks she signalled herself by her own unaided efforts, doctor," said Paquo : " for she has left behind her in Asturias a name which will not readily be forgotten. *Joan the heroine* is the subject of many a fire-side tale and popular legend ; and King Gonzalez has had a monument erected upon the field where her lover Berthold fell, and where he was interred in his armour on the morning after the battle of Buytrago,"

" It is true that she won for herself a great name," observed Engelheim : " but all her excellences would have shone the more sublimely and the more honourably as the wife of a respectable man, rather than as the mistress of a fugitive monk."

" At all events King Gonzalez did not deem either herself or her lover unfitting companions for his beauteous wife, now Queen Isabella," rejoined Paquo : " nor did the Duke of Calatrava, who has been Prime Minister of Asturias ever since Gonzalez yielded to the wishes of the entire nation and reluctantly accepted the crown after the battle of Buytrago. Ah ! Senor Engelheim, ours is a great King, I can assure you ! Do you know all that he has done for Asturias ? But I remember that I lost sight of you immediately after our release from

the archbishop's dungeons at Valladolid—pleasant times those !—and ever since I have not set eyes upon you until to-day."

" I took a prompt leave of a country where such dangers were to be incurred," replied the physician : " and after a few months' restless wanderings, the news of the battle of Buytrago—the death of Berthold—and the departure of Joan for some distant clime, reached my ears. Then was it that I resolved to trace her out, finding that she had thus removed from the immediate influence of her powerful friend's protection."

" You know that Gonzalez Andujar took Abdu-rahman prisoner at the battle of Buytrago," continued Paquo, who was in his element when able to discourse upon the deeds of the Asturian King. " But he treated the Moorish monarch with the highest consideration and respect ; and, taking him to Valladolid, assigned him the archiepiscopal palace as a residence. He then convoked a general assembly of delegates from all parts of the country, and what is more, he allowed every man to give his vote in choosing these delegates. Well, senor, they met at Oviedo—and Gonzalez at once told them that the entire business of the nation was in their hands, and that he himself was only the servant, and not the master of Asturias. He would not even be present at their deliberations, for fear of being thought to influence them unduly. They immediately resolved on making peace with the Moors, although it was notorious that Gonzalez was anxious to march to Cordova and seize upon the Moslem capital. But the delegates feared that a long and protracted warfare must ensue, and that the revenues of Asturias would be utterly exhausted. They there-

fore came to terms with Abdurahman, granting him his liberty on condition that he should thenceforth pay an annual tribute in gold to Asturias. This was assented to, and of course the compact of the Hundred Virgins was annihilated. Well, Abdurahman returned to Cordova, and then the delegates offered the crown of Asturias to Gonzalez Andujar. He emphatically refused, but his own army insisted on placing him upon the throne. He was constrained to accept the diadem, and, appointing Aurelio Duke of Calatrava, his minister, he set to work to make the Asturians happy. You know what Asturias was, doctor, twenty-two years ago; it was swarming with beggars—the working-classes were in misery—and the aristocracy were all-powerful. It is quite different now. There is not a mendicant to be seen from the Pyrenees to Buytrago, the aristocracy have been deprived of all their undue power—and the working-classes are as happy as the day is long. Every year the delegates assemble at Oviedo, and whatever laws they pass, are faithfully executed. King Gonzalez never refuses to carry out their wishes and views, and the Duke of Calatrava is almost as much beloved as his royal master. Indeed, the Duke is an excellent man. There is a story current how his father-in-law refused to pay the ransom-money to redeem him from the hands of Kara Ali, about the same time you and I were scheming and planning together in Asturias. But the Duke never showed the old man any ill-will on that account—but when he became Prime Minister, he sent for him—made him take up his abode at the Calatrava Palace at Oviedo—and treated him with the utmost respect and kindness until the day

of the old man's death, which took place some years afterwards. So you perceive that the Duke must be an excellent nobleman. He possesses a most amiable wife in the Duchess Algenora, and they have a fine family. King Gonzalez and Queen Isabella are also blest with a numerous off-spring—and, by the bye, their eldest daughter is named Juanna, after the Lady Joan Gilbertus."

While the interpreter was thus rattling garrulously on with his details, comment, and explanations, Dr. Engelheim had sunk into a profound reverie; but when Paquo mentioned the name of Joan, he started—looked wildly around for a moment—passed his hand across his brow—and then seemed to recollect himself.

"He is decidedly mad," thought Paquo; then, after a few instants' pause, he said aloud, "But we have not yet told each other what has brought us to Rome. For my part, being a proficient Italian scholar, I am travelling companion to an Asturian nobleman, who knows nothing of the language, treats me well, gives me plenty of money and does not scold if I take an extraordinary cup of wine now and then. We have been here six weeks, and in a few days shall set out on our return to Spain."

"And I only arrived here this morning," observed Dr. Engelheim. "You are aware that for twenty-two years past I have been leading a restless and wandering life—I have already told you this much. There is not a country in Europe which I have passed by unvisited in my pursuit of Joan. My inquiries have been unwearyed—my researches unceasing. Much as I once loved her—deeply as I could have continued to love her—I feel that I cannot die in peace without assuaging this

thirst for vengeance which is consuming me."

"And have you obtained no trace of her?" asked Paquo.

"None," replied the doctor.

"Perhaps she has long been dead?" suggested the interpreter.

"It may be so," was the physician's response: "but a secret voice appears to whisper in the depths of my soul that she is still a denizen of this world. Perhaps under some disguise, she travels about—or dwells in the cloistered halls of the studious—for depend upon it, if she is really alive, she is not inactive. With her restless mind and ambitious aspirations—but has she never been heard of in Asturias," he demanded, suddenly interrupting himself, "since the period of the battle of Buytrago?"

"Having seen the remains of her lover deposited in a grave dug where he fell," replied Paquo, "she bade her friends adieu, and assuming male apparel, as it is reported, she quitted Asturias. Nor do I believe that she has since been heard of. But if she has corresponded with King Gonzalez or Queen Isabella, the fact has been retained secret. Unattended and alone she left Asturias. There were two faithful Africans, named Kiamil and Malagamba, who sank upon their knees and besought permission to accompany her—but, with the tears streaming down her cheeks, she implored them not to persist in their prayer. They have ever since remained in the household of King Gonzalez at Oviedo; and Kiamil, who performed prodigies of valour at the battle of Buytrago, is colonel of the royal guards. A certain Madoz, who also distinguished himself in that fight, as well as in the previous engagements near Valladolid, is the general-in-chief of the Asturian army. But I

forgot to tell you that King Gonzalez has added the provinces of Navarre to his dominions, which now extend to the sea-coast on the eastern side. Abdu-rahman is dead—but the annual tribute of gold is regularly paid by his successor, as it was by himself."

Again had Dr. Engelheim fallen into a profound reverie; and Paquo, having indulged his garrulity to his heart's content, sipped his wine and listened to the conversation of the other persons present in the room—for he was as intimately acquainted with the Italian as with the German language.

"On whom think you the choice will fall?" inquired one of the guests, alluding to the papal election, and addressing the query to an individual standing next to him.

"It is difficult to say," was the response. "The struggle lies between Cardinal Antonelli and Cardinal John Soriano. The former has nothing but his immense wealth and great age to recommend him: the latter, who is a young man, has the most eminent qualifications, as you are doubtless aware."

"On the contrary, signor," replied the person who had first spoken, "I know little or nothing of the candidates. I belong to Naples, and am a stranger in Rome. Can you give me any particulars relative to this interesting proceeding that is now taking place?"

"Cheerfully," was the response. "Cardinal Antonelli is about eighty-four years of age; and his friends declare that his long experience has matured his wisdom and thereby fitted him for the pontificate. On the other hand, the friends and admirers of Cardinal John Soriano assert that the comparative youth of their favourite is indicative of that vigour of intellect and energy of character so much required on

the part of a Pope in these troublous times. Cardinal John is not more than forty-two or forty-three, and is remarkably handsome, with a somewhat delicate expression of countenance. His features are however masculine, but the absence of beard gives them a feminine aspect. He came to Rome about twenty years ago, when quite a young man therefore. I believe he had previously been a year or two in Greece, where he passed his time in study. The same pursuit he continued at Rome, and his learning is miraculous. There is scarcely a language which he does not speak fluently. Such a man, although at first living in the strictest retirement, could not fail to attract notice—and he was invited to the Lateran by the reigning pope of the period. His discourse charmed all who heard him, and his unassuming manners, melancholy demeanour, and generous disposition enhanced the feeling of interest and admiration with which he was regarded. His riches enabled him to exercise his charitable predilections, and he soon became a general favourite in Rome. Pope Leo IV. raised him to high offices, and ultimately created him a Cardinal. His morality in private life is equal to the excellence of his public career—the breath of scandal has never even for a moment sullied his fair fame—and thus you perceive, signor, his chances of success are great and manifold. For my part, I hope he *will* gain the election. But it is impossible to say. If he has a fault—and I do not know that it can be called one—it is that he is believed to be ambitious. But his ambition has placed and maintained him in an honourable career—and therefore it ought to be regarded as a virtue."

At this moment an immense sen-

sation was visible amongst the crowd in the street, and a voice was heard to exclaim, "Here is the cardinal to announce the result!"

Such was indeed the case. The junior dignitary of the conclave had just appeared upon the threshold of the Lateran Palace, and in a loud voice he proclaimed that the ballot had decided in favour of Cardinal John Soriano.

This announcement was received with deafening applause on the part of the assembled multitudes, and Engelheim, starting from his reverie, learnt from his friend Paquo the issue of the election.

CHAPTER LIX

THE CATASTROPHE

It was the custom of the newly-elected pontiff, the moment the result was determined, to proceed from the Lateran Palace to the cathedral of St. Peter's, and attend a solemn mass. The splendid edifice of the present day, with its mighty dome and its semi-circular colonnade, did not then exist; but the cathedral of those times was called after the same saint; and it was to this ancient edifice that Pope John VII., as the successful cardinal was now denominated, was to be escorted by the august conclave and their ecclesiastical subordinates.

From the bronze portals of the Lateran came forth the procession; and the moment the new pontiff appeared he was saluted with the most enthusiastic shouts. A car, gorgeously decorated, and drawn by six milk-white steeds, was in readiness to receive him, while grooms held the richly-caparisoned horses of the cardinals, prelates, and principal ecclesiastic authori-

ties who were to take part in the proceeding.

With a modest dignity, the new pope ascended the car and took his seat upon the purple velvet cushions, under a magnificent canopy of the same costly material, fringed with gold. Then every voice was hushed—the plaudits ceased—and the myriads of spectators held their breath in suspense to catch the words that were about to issue from the lips of their newly-elected sovereign.

Rising from his seat, Pope John VII. extended his hands and blessed the surrounding multitudes. But his voice, which did not appear to be naturally very powerful, now seemed weaker than usual from the tremulousness of his utterance. It was however clear and singularly melodious; and the extemporaneous prayer which he delivered, was full of a beautiful and touching pathos.

Then, the cardinals and the high functionaries being mounted upon their horses, the car was set in motion—the crowds parted in the midst to afford a passage for the august procession—and the bells of every steeple and tower in the Eternal City rang out their musical peal.

The new pope was of middle height, and his figure, as well as could be observed, when clad in the gorgeous pontifical robes which he had assumed, was symmetrically but by no means strongly nor stoutly built. His complexion, naturally pale, was gently flushed with the excitement of the scene, and probably with that inward glow of pride which no mortal could have failed to experience under such circumstances. His nose was slightly aquiline; his lips, somewhat full and sensuous, were the least thing apart, affording a

glimpse of a splendid set of teeth. His hair, worn long according to the fashion of the time, but shaven in a small pot upon the centre of the head, was of a dark brown and seemed to curl naturally, as it flowed from beneath the mitre-diadem that now concealed the bare patch just mentioned. His forehead was admirably formed—broad, high, and stainlessly pale, it seemed stamped with a language calculated to inspire wonder and respect. The same grandeur of intellect shone in his eyes, and in that radiance which the mind diffused over the whole countenance, was absorbed the otherwise sensual expression which it wore.

Such was the personal appearance of Pope John VII. And is it not natural to suppose that he was indeed animated with a sentiment of pride as he thus found himself on the pinnacle of mortal power and on the summit of human grandeur,—a sovereign greater than earthly kings—decked with a triple crown, and himself become the disposer of crowns—a monarch with a small kingdom it is true, but exercising power over all the mightiest kingdoms of Europe. And perhaps his thoughts travelled back to the days of his youth, when he first experienced the throb of ambitious yearnings in his breast, and when he was wont to look along the vista of future years—years then unborn—and wonder within himself whether his vague and undefined dreams of greatness would ever be fulfilled, and if so, in what way their realisation was to be accomplished. Perhaps also, as the shade of melancholy began to deepen on his countenance soon after the gorgeous chariot was set in motion from the bronze gates of the Lateran—perhaps, we say, there was some companion of those

youthful years to which he thus retrospected—some loved and lost one, who had encouraged his ambitious soarings of that earlier period, but who had gone down to the grave long before they were consummated with success. And perhaps, as John VII. now proceeded in that triumphal car, amidst the dense masses of an admiring and enthusiastic people—attended by the princes of the church and the grand dignitaries of the Roman state—while the bells were sprinkling the sun-lit air with their metallic sounds,—perhaps the new pontiff felt that *all* his happiness was not complete, but that the eyes of the one who lay cold in the wormy solitude of the grave should have been there to shine upon his brilliant pathway in order to make it seem more brilliant still !

The gorgeous procession rolled slowly onward, and at length drew near the pillar which borrows its name from the imperial tyrant who desolated Rome in its haughtiest days. At the windows of the tavern mentioned in the preceding chapter, all the guests were anxiously gazing forth, and amongst them were the Spaniard Paquo and the German Engelheim. The natural curiosity of the former was powerfully excited to catch a glimpse of the newly-elected pontiff—and even the physician appeared for the moment to have forgotten his vengeance and the aim of his long, long wanderings, in the absorbing interest of the present scene.

The car was now nearly opposite the window, when an ejaculation of mingled uncertainty and amazement suddenly burst from the lips of Dr. Engelheim. The looks of all the other persons present in the room were instantaneously turned upon him, as he stood with open

mouth, wildly staring eyes, and having all the terrific appearance of one who is suddenly going mad, or who is stricken by the horror and consternation attendant on a spectral apparition. But in a few moments the expression of his countenance changed into a look where wonder still remained, but mingled with a ferocious satisfaction.

“ ‘Tis she ! ‘tis she !” he cried, in the German tongue : and staggering back with a sort of apoplexy of excitement, he leant, gasping and breathless, against a table.

“ What does he say ?—What does he mean ?” demanded all the Italians amongst themselves, as they surveyed the doctor with astonishment and alarm.

“ Yes—by heaven ! ‘tis she !” ejaculated Paquo, in the Spanish language. Then, not pausing to think of the terrific consequences which might ensue from his words, but hurried on by the maddening current of illimitable amazement, he turned towards the Italians present, exclaiming in their own language, “ Your new pope is Joan Gilbertus the heroine of Asturias !”

“ The pope a woman—impossible !” cried every one to whom this startling announcement was addressed.

But ere another word was spoken or another foot moved from its place, Dr. Engelheim, suddenly recovering his self-possession, rushed from the room—sprang precipitately down the stairs—burst with the fury of a mad bull through the dense crowd in front of the tavern—and sprang into the papal car.

A cry—a terrible cry,—a cry of mortal agony,—thrilled from the lips of the newly-elected pope at the first glimpse which *she* caught of Engelheim ; and *she* sank back,

stricken with a sudden swoon, on the purple cushions of the chariot.

The populace were for a moment paralysed with dismay and consternation at this apparent outrage committed upon their sovereign-pontiff ; and the next instant they were crowding towards the car to sacrifice the physician to their rage. But the guests rushed forth from the tavern, and the hurried announcement which they made, once more paralysed every form—fixed every limb—and struck the multitudes with stupefaction.

In another moment the rumour was circulating from tongue to tongue that the newly chosen pope was a woman, and at the same instant Dr. Engelheim, stripping off the pontiff's purple robes—rending aside the closely fitting doublet—and tearing away the fine linen, laid bare a female bosom to the view.

Then rose to heaven the wildest yells of fury and indignation that ever burst from a maddened populace—and a fearful rush was made towards the chariot, in which Joan still lay unconscious, with her breast exposed to every furious gaze, and with Engelheim bending over her like the archdemon of mischief.

Then followed an awful scene of confusion, death, and horror. The chariot was overturned—the physician was hurled violently against the base of Nero's pillar and killed

upon the spot, his brains being dashed out—and Paquo, who had rushed from the tavern-apartment in company with the Italian guests, was thrown down and trampled to death. The unfortunate Joan, awakening to consciousness just at the instant that the infuriate crowd upset the car, fell on the pavement ; but the cushions and the purple robes remaining beneath her form, broke the force of its concussion with the stones.

Springing to her feet, in the full vitality of resuscitated sense and in the terrible excitement of that awful scene, she waved her arm imperiously—and the crowd stood still. The mitre-diadem had fallen from her head—her countenance was ghastly pale—her lips were ashy white—and her eyes glared fearfully.

At the same moment that she thus waved her right arm, with her left hand she drew her doublet over her bosom—and then, while the stillness of death prevailed around, she attempted to speak.

But the words she would have uttered, died in her throat—her lips moved, and gave vent to no articulate sound—naught but a deep gurgling.

Then, as if stricken by an invisible lightning shaft, she fell suddenly forward, and lay motionless.

The people raised her—she was dead !

THE END

act
60

3

people
people

G. W. M. REYNOLDS' BIG TYPE EDITION NOVELS

Mysteries of the Court of London

The most interesting and unrivalled Novel in English in 17 Vols containing frequent description of sensational plots, amazing and spellbinding incidents full of gripping interest introducing many types of humanities in their comic, tragic, adventurous, detective and villainous acts.

Printed on good paper and published in 17 monthly Volumes from August 1922. Royal Octavo Size. Price per Vol. Re 1-0-0.

Orders are registered now as only a limited number of copies can be printed.

ELLEN PERCY

OR

THE MEMOIRS OF AN ACTRESS

In 8 Vols. As. 12 per Vol.]

[Per set, Rs. 5.

We need not harp upon the excellency of the Author's plots, descriptions and several other unrivalled qualifications as they are well-known to the reader of his novels. Hence we simply say that this is one of his very interesting, most extraordinary and world-famed works. The Biography of the Heroine contains many heart-thrilling, romantic occurrences and mysteries which will afford a very interesting food to the brain of the reader and entirely absorb his attention. The various characters in this novel are of different types, teaching several moral and worldly experiences. Every admirer of the Author after once going through this will feel very glad that he had not lost the chance of reading this neatly printed and attractively bound copy.

Leila or the Star of Mingrelia. 2 Vols.—Rs. 1-8-0.

Pope Joan or The Female Pontiff

In 3 Vols. As. 12 per Vol.]

[Per set, Rs. 1-12-0

This novel contains a special variety of plots and heart-thrilling scenes and extraordinary actions occurring in the reigns of a Despotic Sultan and is devoid of indecent scenes.

	Rs. A		Rs. A
Agnes. 6 vols.	6 0	Master Timothy's Book Case, 3 vols.	1 12
Empress Eugenie's Boudoir, 3 vols.	2 4	Patricide, 3 vols.	1 12
May Middleton, 2 vols.	1 8	Necromancer, 3 vols.	2 4
Rye House Plot, 4 vols.	3 0	Kenneth, 4 vols.	3 0
The Coral Island, 4 vols.	3 0	Faust, A Romance, 2 vols.	1 8
Pickwick Abroad, 3 vols.	2 4	The Soldier's Wife, 2 vols.	1 8
GRACE DARLING OR THE HEROINE OF THE FERN ISLAND			0 12
Mary Stuart or the Queen of Scots, 2 vols.			1 4
Robert Macaire or the French Bandit in England, 2 vols.			1 4
Beautyress or the White Slave of England, 2 vols.			1 0
The Young Fisherman or The Spirits of the Lake and The Baroness of Grandmar, sir, 1 vol. (Complete),	0 10
The Young Duchess or the Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, 4 vols.	2 0
MYSTERIES OF PARIS BY EUGENE SUE,	1 0

The Superior Watch Co.,

Post Box No. 167, MADRAS.

Printed at the "Ananda Bodhini" Power Press, Madras.

